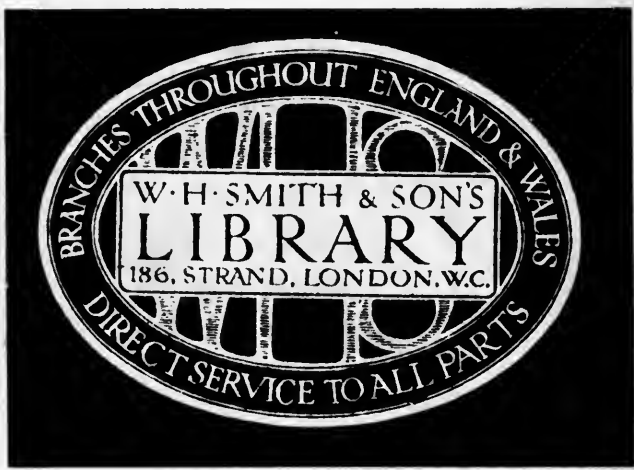


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J E L F ' S

A COMEDY IN FOUR ACTS

BY HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL

LONDON

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

1912

TO
GERALD DU MAURIER

All applications respecting amateur performances of this play must be made to Mr. Vachell's agents, SAMUEL FRENCH, LIMITED, 26 Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.

THE PERSONS OF THE PLAY

SIR JONATHAN DUNNE	<i>A City Magnate</i>
RICHARD JELF	<i>Of Jelf's Private Bank</i>
JAMES PALLISER	<i>Of Palliser's Bank</i>
THE HON. ARCHIBALD MULL	
ADAM WINSLOW	<i>Head Clerk, Jelf's Bank</i>
CHARLES PERKINS	{ <i>Chief Correspondence Clerk,</i> <i>Jelf's Bank</i>
FAGGE	<i>Porter at Jelf's</i>
TOM HARKAWAY	<i>A Bookmaker</i>
GRAMSHAW	<i>Jelf's Butler</i>
BULGER	{ <i>Private Policeman, Jelf's</i> <i>Bank</i>

THE COUNTESS OF SKENE AND SKYE

THE LADY FENELLA MULL

DOROTHY DUNNE

MAID

TIME—TO-DAY

ACT I. The Partners' Room at Jelf's Bank

ACT II. A Garden at Shepperford-on-Thames

ACT III. The same as Act II.

ACT IV. The same as Act I.

The Action of the Play takes place during Eight Days

*First produced at Wyndham's Theatre, April 10th,
1912, with the following Cast:—*

RICHARD JELF	<i>Mr. Gerald du Maurier</i>
SIR JONATHAN DUNNE	<i>Mr. Alfred Bishop</i>
JAMES PALLISER	<i>Mr. Cyril Keightley</i>
THE HON. ARCHIBALD MULL .	<i>Mr. Robert Rendel</i>
ADAM WINSLOW	<i>Mr. Jules Shaw</i>
CHARLES PERKINS	<i>Mr. Hubert Druce</i>
FAGGE	<i>Mr. Harry Cane</i>
TOM HARKAWAY	<i>Mr. A. E. Benedick</i>
GRAMSHAW	<i>Mr. Richard Carfax</i>
BULGER	<i>Mr. Harry Gerrish</i>
THE COUNTESS OF SKENE AND SKYE	} <i>Miss Vane Featherston</i>
THE LADY FENELLA MULL . .	
DOROTHY DUNNE	<i>Miss Dorothy Fane</i>
NANCY	<i>Miss Dorothy Giles</i>

JELF'S

THE FIRST ACT

The scene represents an old-fashioned bank parlour in Fleet Street. Through two large mahogany doors, in the centre, a glimpse is seen of the clerical department, where the staff is at work. The parlour, which is finely decorated in the Adam style, is furnished with massive mahogany furniture. Upon the walls hang portraits of former Jelfs. There is a door leading to a strong-room on the left, and another door, on the right, leading to a private room. The chairs, tables, desks, and book-cases are of a Chippendale pattern. In brief, the general character of the parlour is as different as possible from the ordinary receiving-room of a joint-stock bank.

The time is Tuesday morning in Ascot week.

As the curtain rises WINSLOW is seen, an austere, clean-shaven, middle-aged clerk. He goes into the strong-room, and comes out immediately, carrying a ledger. He closes the door of the strong-room, and stands near it, glancing at the ledger. A COMMISSIONAIRE enters from the

JELF'S

clerical department, puts a letter on the table, and goes out. WINSLOW moves towards his own desk, as a CLERK comes through the centre doors.

CLERK.

Is Mr. Jelf not back yet?

WINSLOW.

Not yet. [*The CLERK goes out. PERKINS enters and places a basket of cheques upon the desk. WINSLOW sits at his desk.*] Anything new?

PERKINS.

I suppose you have heard that Palliser's are in some trouble?

He goes to a stand-up desk.

WINSLOW.

I'm not surprised at that! The sooner neglected businesses are snuffed out, the better.

PERKINS.

Quite!

WINSLOW.

A man can't play polo and race and run a bank.

PERKINS.

I remember old Mr. Palliser, the present man's father——

WINSLOW.

Ah! a commanding personality. He made only one mistake.

PERKINS.

[*Deferentially.*] You mean?

WINSLOW.

He married the wrong woman, married into the wrong family.

PERKINS.

Lady Cynthia Palliser was a great beauty, wasn't she?

WINSLOW.

[*Impatiently.*] She was the daughter of a duke who squandered a noble fortune on the Turf. I'd sooner see a son of mine *under* the turf than on it.

PERKINS.

I quite agree.

FAGGE, *the Bank Porter, wearing a quiet livery, enters.*

FAGGE.

[*Announcing.*] Mr. Mull.

WINSLOW.

Who?

FAGGE.

Mr. Mull, sir.

WINSLOW.

Who is Mr. Mull?

JELF'S

PERKINS.

The brother of Lady Fenella, I presume.

WINSLOW.

Of course! Very well, show Mr. Mull in.

ARCHIE *enters, carrying a paper in his hand. He is a young, handsome man, very fashionably dressed. A pair of racing-glasses are slung round his shoulders. He does not remove his hat. It is obvious that he takes WINSLOW and PERKINS to be bank servants. FAGGE shows ARCHIE in and then quietly returns to the clerical department.*

ARCHIE.

Where's Mr. Jelf?

PERKINS.

He will be back in a few minutes.

ARCHIE.

Muggy day—phew-w-w!

WINSLOW.

Very!

ARCHIE.

I've a thirst that's a considerable asset. Right word to use here, eh?

WINSLOW.

I beg pardon.

ARCHIE.

Never been in a bank parlour before; you seem confoundedly busy!

WINSLOW.

We are always extra busy at the beginning of the week—in the middle of the week, and at the end of the week.

ARCHIE.

Topping! I say, I wonder whether you could manage a large whisky and potash for me? [*Offers Perkins a coin.*] I was up rather late last night, and——

PERKINS.

This is a bank parlour, Mr. Mull—not a bar parlour.

ARCHIE.

Quite! But where does Mr. Jelf keep his stuff? Is that the cave of the spirits?

PERKINS.

[*Crossing to strong room.*] You can't go in there, Mr. Mull.

ARCHIE.

Right oh! [*To WINSLOW.*] I say, you don't look very fit. [*Sits.*] Why not chuck work for a week or so?

WINSLOW.

[*Grimly.*] And what do you think would happen if I did chuck work for a week or so?

ARCHIE.

You'd clear your skin a bit.

WINSLOW.

[*Tartly.*] You men of leisure don't know, and you never

will know, at what a cost to us of health and happiness the business of the world is carried on. If you did——

ARCHIE.

If we did——?

WINSLOW.

You'd respect our working hours. [*Telephone rings.*]
Perkins. [*Motions to PERKINS.*]

PERKINS.

[*Speaking into 'phone.*] Who is it? Who? Yes—Jelf's—what? Speak more slowly and distinctly, and don't shout! Oh, I beg pardon, Lady Skene. [*A laugh from ARCHIE.*] Certainly. You will come on at once. Good-bye. [*Lays down 'phone, and crosses to the desk.*]

ARCHIE.

My mother, eh? I suppose you saw the announcement of my sister's engagement to Mr. Jelf in to-day's paper?

WINSLOW.

[*Setting to work again.*] Mr. Jelf communicated the fact to me himself.

ARCHIE.

Do you take any interest in racing?

[*Throws paper on WINSLOW's book.*]

WINSLOW.

[*Crumples it up and stuffs it into the waste-paper basket.*]
I do not.

ARCHIE.

I suppose you're a golfer.

WINSLOW.

Thank God—no!

DICK *comes in.* FAGGE *follows with an engraving.*

DICK.

Shove it down there, Fagge. [FAGGE *puts the engraving on a small table, and goes out.*] Hullo, Archie! If you get up so early in the morning you'll be taken for a man of business. Let me introduce you to my head clerk, Mr. Adam Winslow, and my chief correspondence clerk, Mr. Charles Perkins—Mr. Mull, my future brother-in-law.

ARCHIE.

Oh, Lord! I'm most awfully sorry!

DICK.

[*Whispering something to* ARCHIE.] Winslow, I'm thinking of taking Mr. Mull into partnership.

WINSLOW.

Good God, Mr. Jelf!

DICK.

It's all right, Winslow—I was only pulling your leg. [*Crosses to his desk. He puts his hat on a cupboard near the centre doors.*] Winslow, I've just resigned from the Braxton Investment and Development Company—never listened to a more outrageous scheme for developing a jumped-up three-cornered ramp.

PERKINS.

The cheques.

DICK.

Right !

WINSLOW.

And three or four letters you must glance at.

DICK.

Gad, if glancing at 'em were enough, my job would be softer than it is.

ARCHIE.

[*Sitting.*] What does it feel like to be a great banker, Dick ?

DICK.

[*Sitting at his desk.*] A man may be mighty smart on a ranch in California, but all sorts of a mug in Fleet Street.

[FAGGE *enters.*]

FAGGE.

Mr. Camberwell Rye desires to see you, sir.

DICK.

Who ?

FAGGE.

Mr. Camberwell Rye.

DICK.

Winslow, who's Mr. Camberwell Rye ?

[WINSLOW *has his back to RYE, who is seen behind* FAGGE.]

WINSLOW.

The editor of the *City Wasp*.

DICK.

That poisonous little insect? He can't sting me.

[*RYE retires hastily.*]

WINSLOW.

Policy says—see him.

DICK.

[*Laughing.*] Policy shall see him. Fagge, show Mr. Camberwell Rye into one of the waiting-rooms, and Mr. Winslow will see him.

FAGGE.

Very good, sir.

[*He goes out.*]

WINSLOW.

[*Testily.*] Your late uncle, Mr. Jelf——

DICK.

Has it ever occurred to you, Winslow, that the boss of this bank is not my late uncle, but his nephew?—God bless him!

WINSLOW.

[*Stiffly.*] Nevertheless, your late uncle would have seen Mr. Rye.

DICK.

My uncle is in one of two places—Mr. Rye can search for him in either. [*WINSLOW goes out.*] Perkins, send a message to tell the Sangan Rubber people, I'll be there at 11.15 sharp.

PERKINS.

I forgot to mention that Lady Skene is on her way here.

[*PERKINS goes out.*]

JELF'S

DICK.

Well, Archie?

ARCHIE.

[*Warmly.*] My dear old Kangaroo, I congratulate you! Fenella is a dear—and a brother ought to know.

DICK.

[*Fervently.*] A darling! Of course, I realise my luck, Archie, and—er—all that.

ARCHIE.

All what?

DICK.

[*Awkwardly, as he rises.*] I'm not worthy of such a—such a——

ARCHIE.

Tosh!

DICK.

[*Holding up engraving.*] Sir Thomas Jelf, Lord Mayor of London, and founder of the Bank—take off your hat to him.

ARCHIE.

[*Rising.*] Stout fellow, old Jelf. [*Dick turns the engraving, it is framed alike on both sides—he exhibits a beautiful photograph of Fenella.*] By Jove!—Fenella!

DICK.

My idea. See. [*He turns it.*] Neat, eh? Cheers me up in the morning [*Replaces picture.*] What a swell you are! [*Crosses to ARCHIE.*

ARCHIE.

Ascot. Aren't you going?

DICK.

Too busy here. Let's look at you.

[He examines ARCHIE'S coat.]

ARCHIE.

Banning. . . . I was poured into it this morning.

DICK.

What a wonderful hat!

ARCHIE.

Stouted.

DICK.

Stouted? What do you mean?

ARCHIE.

You take a sponge—dip it into some rich stout—sort of stuff they boil a nigger in—and apply gently. Result, this! Impervious to rain! Look! *[Rubs it the wrong way.]*

DICK.

I'll have it done to mine.

ARCHIE.

By George—it wants something.

[FAGGE enters.]

DICK.

[Sitting.] Fagge, get me a pint of rich London stout, and a sponge.

FAGGE.

[*Discreetly surprised.*] And a sponge? yes, sir. Sir Jonathan Dunne is here, Mr. Jelf.

ARCHIE.

[*To FAGGE.*] Who?

FAGGE.

Sir Jonathan Dunne, sir.

ARCHIE.

What a stroke of luck! That's the very thing I wanted to see you about!

DICK.

[*To FAGGE.*] I'll see Sir Jonathan in one minute.

FAGGE.

Very good, sir.

[*FAGGE goes out.*]

DICK.

What d'you mean by luck?

ARCHIE.

[*Crossing to DICK, and catching hold of him.*] Do you know Sir Jonathan well?

DICK.

I should smile—he has a huge pile of trust money with us. A tough old bird!

ARCHIE.

Chilled steel. Do you know his daughter, Dolly? The mater calls her Honey-pot.

DICK.

Yes, yes, I met her—let me think—at Hurlingham about a fortnight ago. I was with Harry Venn.

ARCHIE.

My dear boy, she's beyond the giddy horizon! You must remember her!

DICK.

Yes, I do—perfectly! You see, old chap, since I've been yanked off a ranch into this bank, I seem to have met thousands and thousands! But I do remember Miss Dunne.

ARCHIE.

I want you to ask Sir Jonathan and Dolly to that place you've taken at Shepperford this next week end.

DICK.

Why?

ARCHIE.

Because I'm dead spoons on Dolly.

DICK.

Right you are! I'll ask Sir Jonathan down.

ARCHIE.

Ps-s-sh! Don't mention I'm coming.

DICK.

Why not?

ARCHIE.

He's fed up with me, but [*laughs*] Dolly isn't.

DICK.

Sir Jonathan is Chairman of the Amalgamated Association of Bankers—I mustn't offend him.

ARCHIE.

Bless you, Dick!—a man with £30,000 a year *can't* offend anybody.

DICK.

You nip through that door [*indicates the door on the right,*] and wait. [*ARCHIE obeys quickly. DICK rings the bell, and an instant later FAGGE ushers in SIR JONATHAN, an imposing city magnate, very starched in manner, the typical Chairman. FAGGE disappears.*] Good morning, Sir Jonathan. [*DICK rises and holds out his hand.*]

SIR JONATHAN.

Good morning, Richard.

DICK.

Let me take your hat.

SIR JONATHAN.

I see by this morning's papers that I must congratulate you.

DICK.

[*Putting SIR JONATHAN'S tall hat on the table.*] Thanks!

SIR JONATHAN.

I trust that marriage, with its attendant graces and benedictions, will help rather than hinder you.

DICK.

Eh?

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Suavely pompous.*] This bank claims your almost undivided attention.

DICK.

Oh!

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Frowns a little.*] You are a young man, and—er—pardon me—inexperienced in banking.

DICK.

I have good old Winslow—thank the Lord!

SIR JONATHAN.

A sound adviser, Adam Winslow. As your late uncle's intimate friend, I take a warm interest in you, Richard.

DICK.

Thanks! [*Produces a memorandum book.*] Any tips—I mean hints—gratefully received.

SIR JONATHAN.

Tut, tut! Nevertheless, a seasonable word of advice can do no harm, and now that you are back in England nearly six months, and have more or less tutored yourself into the inner workings of a banking life, I rather wanted to hear from your own lips that the policy of Jelf's, the conservative conduct of—er—a fine business, will be sustained as heretofore. [WINSLOW enters from the right.

DICK.

Ask Winslow.

WINSLOW.

Good-morning, Sir Jonathan.

SIR JONATHAN.

Good-morning, Mr. Winslow. [*They shake hands.*] Are you going to make a banker of this young man?

[*Sits.*

WINSLOW.

[*Heartily.*] Mr. Jelf has tireless energy—and in less than six months he has mastered the—er—principia of our business.

[*A CLERK enters with a letter, which he gives to WINSLOW, and then goes out.*

DICK.

Thank you, Winslow. Sir Jonathan trusts that the conduct of Jelf's will continue, as heretofore, upon sound and conservative lines—what do you reply to that?

WINSLOW.

[*Sitting at his own desk.*] It will.

SIR JONATHAN.

I am relieved. We have had too much wildcat speculation lately. I mention no names, Mr. Winslow.

WINSLOW.

[*Nodding.*] I quite understand, Sir Jonathan.

DICK.

I'm hanged if I do.

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Portentously.*] There is another bank, I repeat—I mention no names—which may well serve as an object lesson to you, Richard. Mr. Winslow will explain later.

WINSLOW.

Yes.

DICK.

I should like to get something off my chest. I do realise—perhaps more strongly than you think—my responsibilities and my ignorance.

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Magnificently.*] Your—er—ignorance, my dear boy, will diminish as the sense of your responsibility increases.

WINSLOW.

Admirably put !

DICK.

Yes, I know. All the same, it's hard on Winslow to have a tenderfoot for a Chief, and I do assure both of you that I feel the injustice—yes, injustice of my being *yanked*—I mean—exalted over his head. [*Looks at WINSLOW.*] But—there it is. [*Shrugs his shoulders.*] I must try to justify my existence as my uncle's successor. I don't despair of doing so with the help and advice of friends older and much wiser than myself.

SIR JONATHAN.

My advice will be always—er—er—

DICK.

[*Suggesting.*] On tap?

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Stiffly.*] At your service. [*Rises.*] Good day, Mr. Winslow.

WINSLOW.

Good day, Sir Jonathan.

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Slightly thawing.*] We shall make a banker of you, Richard, because it's in the blood—in the blood——

DICK.

[*Shaking hands.*] Thanks. [*He picks up SIR JONATHAN'S hat.*]

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Putting on a glove, and unbending.*] The great secret of successful banking lies in the power of saying 'No.'

DICK.

[*Repeating.*] No.

SIR JONATHAN.

You don't agree?

DICK.

I do agree. I'll practise the art of saying *No*.

SIR JONATHAN.

Good-bye, my boy.

DICK.

Good-bye. [*Handing hat.*] Your hat, Sir Jonathan. I see you don't use stout.

[*DICK with his thumb rubs SIR JONATHAN'S hat the wrong way.*]

SIR JONATHAN.

I don't take you. [*Moves towards the centre doors.*] Stout?

DICK.

Hold hard—oh, I beg your pardon! I met Miss Dunne the other day—charming young lady!

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Smoothing his hat.*] Dolly has charm, and—ahem!—intelligence.

DICK.

Smart as chain-lightning. If you have no better engagement, will you and Miss Dunne spend this week end at my place at Shepperford?

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Considering.*] This week end? Um—I think we are free. Yes, yes, to be sure—we *are* free! I accept with pleasure. Au revoir, Richard—au revoir.

[*Waves his hand with dignity and disappears.*]

DICK.

[*At the door.*] Au revoir—I can promise you a good cigar. . . . Winslow, I think you'd better see SIR JONATHAN out; he's a bit of a nut. [WINSLOW follows SIR

JONATHAN. DICK *laughs, and goes to the door on the right, opening it.*] Archie!

ARCHIE.

[*Off.*] Right!

[*Appears.*

DICK.

They'll weigh in on Saturday afternoon.

ARCHIE.

[*Slaps DICK on the back and crosses with him.*] You're the goods, Dick. I wish I could do something for you.

DICK.

[*Sits.*] You can. [*Produces mem.-book from his pocket.*] I want a tip or two.

ARCHIE.

I've chucked backin' losers. Mug's game.

DICK.

[*Awkwardly.*] Look here, Archie, I'm not quite so cock-sure of myself as you are. Help me to round off some of my angles! Start right in and smooth the kinks out of me.

ARCHIE.

Don't be a silly ass!

[*FAGGE enters.*]

FAGGE.

Countess of Skene and Skye to see you, sir.

DICK.

All right! I'll ring in one minute. [*FAGGE goes out.*] You'd better go, Archie. I expect she's come on business.

ARCHIE.

On business? I say, Dick——

DICK.

Yes.

ARCHIE.

[*Confidentially.*] I told you I'd given up backin' losers, but mother hasn't.

DICK.

Oh!

ARCHIE.

She may want to borrow a bit—and if she tastes blood—twig?

DICK.

[*Drily.*] I twig.

ARCHIE.

Can I get out that way?

DICK.

Go through the door on the right and then through the bank.

ARCHIE.

By-bye, old thing! Thanks awfully!

[ARCHIE hurries off as DICK rings the bell. FAGGE returns, ushering in LADY SKENE. He does not announce her, but closes the door softly. LADY SKENE is dressed very fashionably. She wears a monocle and carries a walking-stick.]

DICK.

How do you do, Lady Skene?

[Shakes her hand.]

LADY SKENE.

Very middlin'—very middlin'! Full of gout! My gastronomic tour of France ought to have ended at Aix.

DICK.

[*Looking at her frock.*] I say—spiffing!

LADY SKENE.

My Ascot frock—Madame Prune—old robber!

DICK.

I must kiss you.

LADY SKENE.

[*Submitting.*] You're a dear, affectionate boy! Nobody's kissed me for a hundred years! Family portraits, eh! What a nice old-fashioned place you've got here.

DICK.

It's been here since the Commonwealth.

LADY SKENE.

[*Sinks gracefully into an armchair near DICK's desk.*] Was your father a partner in this bank?

DICK.

[*Sitting.*] My father was a clever over-worked Manchester doctor—but my grandfather and my great-grandfather sat in that jolly old chair.

LADY SKENE.

Really? So this is where Dives makes his money?

DICK.

And spends his time.

LADY SKENE.

[*Looking round.*] I expect you see an odd lot here—gentle and simple.

DICK.

Some of 'em are not quite so simple as they look.

LADY SKENE.

And do you let 'em help themselves out of your pile?

DICK.

[*Politely.*] Can I do anything for you, Lady Skene?

LADY SKENE.

Yes, my dear man—you can. I've been a stupid old fool.

DICK.

Out West, curiosity in man is not only sinful but dangerous.

LADY SKENE.

Curiosity in woman, my dear boy, is a passion stronger than love, and generally survives it. What d'ye want to know?

DICK.

[*Smiling and patting her hand which is lying on his desk.*] How much?

LADY SKENE.

How much!

DICK.

The amount, please . . . in full. [*He picks up a quill.*

JELF'S

LADY SKENE.

In . . . full? Young man, you are too generous!

DICK.

Am I? In that case—— [*Lays down quill.*]

LADY SKENE.

[*Hurriedly.*] I owe £470, more or less.

DICK.

£470! You have been painting the town a pale shrimp pink. [*Begins to write a cheque.* LADY SKENE *picks up a ruler and shakes it at him.*] Treat that with respect, please.

LADY SKENE.

Respect?

DICK.

[*Writing cheque.*] That's George III.

LADY SKENE.

George III.?

DICK.

I mean Queen Victoria.

LADY SKENE.

Queen Victoria?

DICK.

Our longest and best ruler.

LADY SKENE.

Silly boy!

DICK.

There ! [*Blots the cheque and hands it over.*]

LADY SKENE.

God bless my soul ! You've drawn it for five hundred pounds !

DICK.

[*Smiling.*] Didn't you say—more or less ? My own small debts used invariably to be more.

LADY SKENE.

They always are more. I can never pay you back, Richard.

DICK.

[*Whipping out his mem.-book.*] Yes, you can very easily. [*Explaining.*] I know that I've a lot to learn. Now—fire away ! Shoot me—sitting.

LADY SKENE.

What do you mean ?

DICK.

Till now I've not had the privilege of trotting, so to speak, in your class——

LADY SKENE.

[*She laughs and puts her head on one side, meditatively.*] There are one or two little things——

DICK.

[*Moistening pencil.*] Right ! Now—let her rip !

LADY SKENE.

Go to a smarter tailor.

DICK.

[*Making note.*] New kit.

LADY SKENE.

You're too jumpy, dear Richard.

DICK.

[*Making note.*] Jumpy. They called me the Kangaroo at Harrow.

LADY SKENE.

Too much slang for a banker.

DICK.

Tone down manner—scrap slang. Next?

LADY SKENE.

Your cook at Shepperford is—er—lamentably suburban!
You ought to engage a *chef*. [*Rises.*]

DICK.

Engage *chef*. Pension cook. By the way, Sir Jonathan Dunne and his daughter are coming to Shepperford this week end.

LADY SKENE.

What! what! on Archie's account? Good biz! You've deuced little to learn.

[JIM PALLISER *enters, a tall, distinguished man, admirably groomed and dressed. He wears*

patent leather shoes with white spats, a grey, cut-away suit, white waistcoat, and a gardenia in his buttonhole. A pair of Zeiss glasses, in a highly-polished, dark brown case, hang from his shoulders. He wears a beautiful hat.

JIM.

Hullo! hullo! Oh, I beg your pardon—how do you do, Lady Skene?

LADY SKENE.

How do, Palliser!

[She peacocks out, followed by DICK. JIM puts his hat on the table.]

DICK.

[Returning and greeting JIM warmly.] My dear old Jim! How stunning you look!

JIM.

[Standing centre.] Ascot. Must be a credit to my gees. Two runnin' to-day.

DICK.

It's an education to see you. I say, who's your snip?

JIM.

There's only one fellow who can cut a coat decently—Banning, of Savile Row.

DICK.

[Turns to his desk and writes in mem.-book.] Banning—Savile Row. Where is Savile Row?

JIM.

[*Confounded.*] May the Lord have mercy on your colossal ignorance!

DICK.

I hope He will! Would Banning make me a couple of suits by the end of the week?

JIM.

Banning is rather particular, but if you mention my name, he might. [*Pulls a handkerchief from his sleeve.*]

DICK.

Where did you get that from? That's great! I must do that. [*He takes his handkerchief from his pocket, puts it up his sleeve, pulls it out and flourishes it; he returns it to his sleeve, looking at JIM's spats.*] Ha, ha! The real right note for the Enclosure. Saw a pair like that in the Strand—three-and-six.

JIM.

Three-and-six! Look here, Dick, a self-respecting man doesn't buy reach-me-down spats at three-and-six.

DICK.

Banning—eh?

JIM.

Lord, no! Your bootmaker. [*Looking at Dick's boots.*] Have you a bootmaker, or did you buy them . . . in the Strand?

DICK.

They're Yankee—*bull*-toes—very comfy.

JIM.

I daresay. I must be at Waterloo in half an hour, but I nipped in to——

DICK.

To congratulate me, eh?

JIM.

Congratulate you, Dick?

DICK.

[*Chuckling.*] Haven't you seen the blessed announcement in the papers?

JIM.

What announcement?

DICK.

The announcement of my engagement?

JIM.

You don't say so! To whom?

DICK.

[*Going up to the engraving.*] To—[*Turns engraving*] a perfect peach!

JIM.

[*Startled.*] Fenella—Mull?

DICK.

[*Heartily.*] You know her?

JIM.

[*With a short laugh.*] Know her? I've known her for years!

DICK.

I'm simply bursting with joy and gladness ! And now, Jim, hunt a chair. I'm going to enjoy myself talking to a pal who doesn't want anything. [*He laughs gaily.*]

JIM.

[*Sarcastically.*] Is there a man living who doesn't want something ?

DICK.

Ha, ha ! I'd forgotten that you and your brothers were bankers too. [*The telephone bell rings. DICK picks it up.*] Who is it ? Yes, I'm Jelf. Who is that, Mr. Israel Rockenheimer ? Will I do ?—what, Mr. Rockenheimer—will I come on your board ? No—I said no yesterday, and when I say no on Monday, I mean no on Tuesday, and also on Wednesday. [*Hangs up instrument and turns to JIM.*] Hot stuff—Mr. Israel Rockenheimer !

[*PERKINS enters with a letter.*]

PERKINS.

Another application from young Sir Charles Marwood. He asks for an increase of over-draft.

DICK.

Who ?

PERKINS.

Sir Charles Marwood.

DICK.

No.

PERKINS.

His father was a valued customer, Mr. Jelf.

DICK.

Isn't he the young gentleman who pleaded the Gaming Act the other day?

PERKINS.

Yes.

DICK.

No—certainly not!

JIM.

Good morning, Mr. Perkins.

PERKINS.

[*Stiffly.*] Good morning, Mr. Palliser.

[*He scowls at JIM as he goes out.*]

JIM.

Did you see that?

DICK.

Dry old file—absolutely scowled at you.

JIM.

[*Crossing to arm-chair, with a short laugh.*] I'm here to tell you why he scowled.

DICK.

[*Alert.*] Don't tell me you've come on business?

JIM.

I have. Look here, Dick, you know how we've all suffered from the depreciation of gilt-edged securities?

DICK.

We haven't suffered very much.

JIM.

Your uncle was astoundingly astute.

DICK.

[*With grimace.*] That's been well rubbed in.

JIM.

Palliser's is in rather a tight place.

DICK.

[*With real sympathy.*] My poor old Jim, I'm most awfully sorry to hear this !

JIM.

I want to tell you all about it.

DICK.

Shall I send for Winslow ?

JIM.

Don't ! Winslow dislikes me.

DICK.

Dislikes you—why ?

JIM.

Because I'm not cut to his confounded pattern ; perhaps you don't know that Palliser's financed that coast railway in California ?

DICK.

You don't say so ! It was close to my ranch ; I know all about it.

JIM.

Then you know that we've a damned good lock up.
The big roads must buy us out.

DICK.

To be sure.

JIM.

But meanwhile we are rather crippled.

DICK.

I'll look into this and help you if I can.

JIM.

I knew you'd say that. I can tell you everything in five minutes.

DICK.

I'm expecting Fenella. She's going to show me her Ascot frock.

JIM.

Oh—then I'll drop in again later.

DICK.

I've an idea—have you any engagement for this week end? No? Good! Come to Shepperford, and we'll go into your affairs thoroughly.

JIM.

[*Hesitatingly.*] Will you be alone?

DICK.

[*Derisively.*] Alone? I'm never alone now. Lady Skene and Fenella and old Archie will be there.

JIM.

I—I don't think I can come.

DICK.

What rot! Sir Jonathan Dunne is coming too! He may be able to help.

JIM.

Sir Jonathan Dunne? By Jove, he could help!

DICK.

He was a great friend of my uncle. I know he'd strain a point to oblige me.

JIM.

[*Rising.*] All right. I'll come. Nothing is likely to happen before then. Much obliged, Dick!

DICK.

[*Rising.*] Not at all. [*Picks up JIM's hat, and laughs knowingly.*] I say, I'm on to this—stouted, eh?

[*Rubs it the wrong way with awful results.*]

JIM.

[*Snatching.*] What the . . . Dash it, Dick, are you mad?

DICK.

I thought it was stouted.

JIM.

I don't wear stouted hats in the day-time. Damn! I'll miss my train. This must be ironed. Good-bye—and thanks again!

[JIM hurries out.]

DICK.

[*Crossing to centre doors, and calling.*] I'm sorry! [*Laughs, then comes back feeling in his pocket for his handkerchief; not finding it, he searches for it unsuccessfully. Then he rubs his nose with his finger, touches the bell, and sits as FAGGE enters, carrying a tankard of stout and a sponge.*]

FAGGE.

The stout, sir—and the sponge.

DICK.

Shove 'em down there. [FAGGE *puts them on the top of the cupboard.*] Fagge, you might go out and buy me a handkerchief. [*Gives him a coin.*] I'm expecting Lady Fenella Mull. When her ladyship comes, show her in, and remember that I'm not to be disturbed on any account.

FAGGE.

[*Discreetly smiling.*] No, sir.

DICK.

Well, Fagge, how are the children?

FAGGE.

[*At the centre doors.*] Getting over the whooping-cough nicely, sir.

DICK.

Thanks to a good mother, eh? That eldest boy of yours we've got here is a very clever kid.

FAGGE.

He can't thank his mother for that, sir.

[He goes out as the telephone rings.]

DICK.

Is that you, Mrs. Mortlake? Next Saturday? Sorry! I've a little jamboree of my own. What? Yes, it's true. *[FENELLA enters and stands listening.]* Lucky beggar, ain't I? Thanks most awfully. *[Laughs.]* Oh, it's run smooth enough so far. Good-bye. *[He sees FENELLA, and takes off the receivers and lays them on desk, then puts his thumb to his nose at them, and crosses to FENELLA.]* My dear girl!

FENELLA is a tall, beautiful woman of two-and-twenty, exquisitely dressed, and very distinguished in appearance. DICK greets her fervently, and she allows him to kiss her cheek.

FENELLA.

[Laughing.] My dear Richard!

[She releases herself from his embrace.]

DICK.

[His expressive face indicates a slight disappointment.]
Great Scot! You are——

FENELLA.

It's rather—nice, isn't it? *[Holding out parasol.]* But what of this, I ask you?

DICK.

You'll knock spots out of the Royalties! Hang this bank! I wish I was coming with you.

FENELLA.

I wish you were. It's such a disappointment.

DICK.

[*Going to his desk.*] Here's something to cheer you up.
[*Opens a jewel case containing a pearl necklace.*] What of this, I ask you?

FENELLA.

[*Sitting in arm-chair.*] Oh, Richard! How perfectly lovely!

DICK.

[*Exhibiting a tiara.*] And what of this, I ask you?

FENELLA.

Am I to choose between them? [*With a delightful little laugh.*] Which do you like best, you nice man?

DICK.

Pearls for you, darling!

FENELLA.

[*With a slight shade of expression.*] Why—for me?

DICK.

Because——

FENELLA.

[*Looking up at him.*] Yes?

DICK.

[*His voice trembles a little.*] Because I associate pearls with everything pure and sweet and lovely.

FENELLA.

Richard, do you know, you frighten me?

DICK.

Frighten you?

FENELLA.

This is my fourth season. [*Lightly.*] Most people would say that diamonds suited me better than pearls.

DICK.

You're a sparkler—and no error! [*He is about to kiss her, but very cleverly, without seeming to be prudish, she evades him and picks up the tiara.*]

FENELLA.

Positively—I can't choose!

DICK.

[*Genially, with a jolly laugh.*] I don't want you to choose. They are both yours.

FENELLA.

Oh, Richard! You are much too generous! [*He takes her hand and kisses it.*] Richard! Richard!

DICK.

I would do anything for you or your people!

FENELLA.

[*Alert.*] Oh, *have* you been doing anything for my people?

DICK.

[*Confused.*] Nothing—er—worth mentioning.

FENELLA.

[*Rising, in a hard voice.*] Has Archie been asking you for money?

DICK.

[*Relieved.*] Rather not! He's asked me to persuade Sir Jonathan and Miss Dunne to come to Shepperford next Saturday. I did arrange that for him.

FENELLA.

Has my mother asked you for money?

DICK.

Not exactly!

FENELLA.

[*Frowning.*] What have you given her?

DICK.

I say, you *are* sharp!

FENELLA.

[*Frowning.*] My wits have been sharpened by some rather humiliating experiences. Richard, I am ashamed. I can hardly look you in the face, I—I——

DICK.

[*Equally distressed.*] My darling——

FENELLA.

Mother might have waited till we were married. [*Almost fiercely.*] What did you give her? [*Sits.*]

DICK.

Only five hundred pounds.

FENELLA.

[*Mockingly.*] Only five hundred pounds! And suppose I changed my mind——

DICK.

[*Gently.*] Changed your mind?

FENELLA.

Such things have happened. But—*now!*

DICK.

What a tempest in a tea-pot! Cheer up! Look at your pretty things! You love pretty things, don't you?

FENELLA.

[*Recovering herself.*] I have loved pretty things too much. [*She puts the jewellery back into the two cases and closes them with a significant snap.*] There! [*Smiles.*] Put them into your safe, Richard, and don't let me see them again till our wedding day.

DICK.

[*Slowly.*] All right.

FENELLA.

[*Changing the subject abruptly, as she puts on her gloves.*] Jim Palliser used to be a friend of yours?

DICK.

He is still. We were at Harrow together. Being in California for the last ten years, I've not seen anything of

him, but I always thought a lot of Jim, because, I suppose, he was so utterly different from me.

FENELLA.

[*Reflectively.*] Yes.

DICK.

[*With feeling.*] He was such a blood at school—I know that I'm rather rough, but you must polish me up, raise me to your level! Any hints? [*Produces note-book.*]

FENELLA.

What's that?

DICK.

I've started a memorandum book. I'm going to jot down the little things that seem to count so awfully in society. On a ranch one never bothers much about little things—any tip you could give me?

FENELLA.

Richard, I respect you, because little things don't count with you. Put that ridiculous note-book away. We were speaking of Jim Palliser—I want you to help him.

DICK.

[*Quickly.*] You know that he needs help? [*She nods.*] Then he's a great friend of yours too? [*She nods again.*] Good! Did he ask you to ask me to help him?

FENELLA.

No.

JELF'S

DICK.

Then how do you know that he needs help?

FENELLA.

Everybody knows it.

DICK.

Good Lord!

FENELLA.

I mean—all his friends know it.

DICK.

I see. Oddly enough, Jim was here this morning. I've asked him to join us at Shepperford next Saturday.

FENELLA.

He refused? I mean—he has so many engagements.

DICK.

I persuaded him. Together we shall go into his affairs. I want to help him, if I can.

[WINSLOW enters, centre.]

FENELLA.

Please don't mention to him that I spoke of his affairs.

WINSLOW.

I beg pardon——

DICK.

Winslow, this is Lady Fenella Mull, my future wife.

FENELLA.

[*Rising.*] Mr. Jelf has often spoken to me of you, Mr. Winslow. [Offers her hand.]

WINSLOW.

[*Taking it and bowing.*] May I offer my congratulations?

DICK.

[*Heartily.*] Winslow is the power behind the throne here, Fin. I couldn't worry along without him. But he bothers my life out, all the same! What is it now?

WINSLOW.

[*Grimly indicating the disconnected 'phones.*] That!
[*Crosses and sits at his own desk.*]

[*DICK replaces telephone receiver.*]

FENELLA.

By-bye, Richard—see you to-night.—[*He kisses her hand.*]
Ça ne se fait pas. Good-bye, Mr. Winslow.
[*She goes to the centre doors.*]

WINSLOW.

Good-bye, Lady Fenella.

DICK.

[*Following her.*] Must you go?

FENELLA.

[*Lightly.*] The power behind the throne says so.
Business! [*She disappears with a light laugh.*]

DICK.

Confound you, Winslow! What a tyrant you are!

WINSLOW.

That little bit of carelessness may lose us a big bit of underwriting.

DICK.

I don't care! I'm sick of this bank! sick, sick, sick of it! [*Abruptly.*] I think I shall let one of the joint stock concerns absorb us. [*Glances interrogatively at WINSLOW.*

WINSLOW.

[*Rises.*] Mr. Jelf!

DICK.

I mean it.

WINSLOW.

You can't mean it!

DICK.

I do.

WINSLOW.

But, good heavens! you can't. . . .

DICK.

Ah! Ah! Spoofed! [*With a laugh.*] Have you no sense of humour? Do you think that my grandfather having sat in that chair means nothing to me? Bless you, Winslow, I'm almost drunk with the smell of this old bank parlour. Goes to his own desk. All the same, I wish I was going to Ascot—By the way, is Palliser's in trouble?

WINSLOW.

[*Crossing to DICK with a letter.*] I fear so. The three brothers believe in a minimum of work and a maximum

of . . . self-indulgence. [*Handing him letter.*] You might just glance at that.

DICK.

[*Gravely.*] Do you mean that there is—er—danger?

WINSLOW.

[*Stiffly.*] There is always danger when it becomes known in the business world that a banker has been speculating recklessly.

DICK.

[*Much impressed.*] Was Sir Jonathan alluding to Palliser's just now, when he spoke of an object lesson?

WINSLOW.

He was. The credit of Palliser's is strained to—to breaking point; and the senior partner [*Contemptuously*] goes to Ascot!

DICK.

Two of his horses are running to-day. Do you blame him for wanting to see a run for his money?

WINSLOW.

[*Drily.*] He may see a run without—money.

DICK.

I must go to this Sangan meeting at 11.15. [*Hands back letter.*] Very diplomatic! You might stuff those away for me. [*Indicates the cases of jewellery.*]

WINSLOW.

Certainly. [*Picks up the cases and goes into the strong-room.*]

[*Dick is left standing with his legs rather apart and with his hands in his pockets. He smiles, approaches the engraving, turns it, and gazes at the portrait of FENELLA ; picks it up, kisses it, and turning it, hangs it on wall. While he is kissing the picture of Lady Fenella, FAGGE enters carrying a small salver on which is a handkerchief. DICK looks at it, and suddenly recollects where his own handkerchief is. He pulls it from his sleeve and laughs. Then he returns it to his sleeve, takes the one from the salver and puts it up his other sleeve, and goes out as the curtain falls.*

THE SECOND ACT

The scene represents a small portion of the garden of DICK's house at Shepperford-on-Thames. Part of the house is seen at the back. On the left, a French window, wide open, leads from the lawn into the drawing-room. There is a door, centre, communicating with the hall and dining-room. There are trees, flowers, and shrubs. A table is laid for tea, and round it are some comfortable wicker chairs. Higher up, towards the left of the centre door, is a smaller table upon which are matches and cigarettes. On the right, low down, is a sundial. A path on the right leads to the river.

The light is that of a brilliant afternoon in June, upon the Saturday following.

[As the curtain rises a gramophone from a passing river steamer is heard. ARCHIE is going through an imaginary interview with SIR JONATHAN. He is about to embrace the sundial when DICK appears at an upper window.]

DICK.

Archie, what are you doing?

ARCHIE.

[*Seeing GRAMSHAW.*] Tell you in a moment.

[GRAMSHAWE enters, carrying a tray on which are drinks, glasses, straws, etc. He puts the tray on the small table.]

DICK.

Fin's room looks fine, roses everywhere. Nip up and have a look at it.

ARCHIE.

Too blazing hot.

DICK.

Slacker!

[Disappears from window.]

ARCHIE.

[To GRAMSHAWE.] Hullo, what's that?

GRAMSHAWE.

Sounds like a beano on the river.

ARCHIE.

Rather a good tune.

GRAMSHAWE.

Yes, sir; I think it's called "His Master's Voice."

[He goes out, centre, as DICK enters from the hall and crosses to the sundial. The sound of the gramophone gradually dies away.]

DICK.

What do you think of the sundial?

ARCHIE.

Fine!

DICK.

I think Fenella will like it.

ARCHIE.

Sure !

DICK.

What were you up to just now, Archie ?

ARCHIE.

Rehearsing my heart-to-heart talk with Sir Jonathan.

DICK.

Good idea ! When I asked him to come down to Shepperford, he was rather pleased. I'm sure he guessed that you would be here.

[Puts on a rough check jacket which hangs on the sundial.]

ARCHIE.

[Doubtfully.] I told you he was rather fed up with me.

DICK.

Because, I expect, you've been philandering. Sir Jonathan likes direct methods. And, between ourselves, he must—as a business man—appreciate a fine connection.

ARCHIE.

Do you really think so ?

DICK.

I'm sure of it : let's hear what you're going to say. Imagine Miss Dunne out of the way. I'll be the old man. *[Crosses to the right, ARCHIE crosses to the left. DICK advances briskly to greet ARCHIE.]* Delighted to find you here, Mr. Mull. Oh, I forgot, he's an old man. *[Repeats*

performance, assuming an old man with bent knees, etc.]
Ahem ! I'm delighted to find you here, Mr. Mull.

ARCHIE.

Honoured, I'm sure, Sir Jonathan.

DICK.

You'll have to speak up. I expect he's a bit deaf.

ARCHIE.

Honoured, I'm sure, Sir Jonathan.

[They shake hands. ARCHIE sits.]

DICK.

Help me down, Archie ; remember I'm a patriarch.
[ARCHIE helps him down. They sit down together. DICK wipes and puts on a pair of imaginary glasses.] Hot weather, but seasonable for the time of year.

ARCHIE.

[Sitting to the left of DICK.] My dear Sir Jonathan, happy chance has given me this gilt-edged opportunity of telling you how much I have enjoyed the privilege—of—er—your acquaintance, and may I add—friendship.

DICK.

[Pompously.] Your late father's son, Mr. Mull, will always be welcome in Portland Place.

ARCHIE.

Ah ! Sir Jonathan, I want to take from Portland Place

its most precious ornament. [*With sincerity.*] I love your daughter devotedly.

DICK.

[*Graciously.*] Archibald, there is no young man to whom I would entrust my dear child with greater satisfaction and confidence. You have not large means, I presume?

ARCHIE.

I have not.

DICK.

[*Inflating.*] As my daughter is marrying into one of the oldest and noblest families in the kingdom, I propose to settle on her at her marriage £100,000.

ARCHIE.

My dear Sir Jonathan!

DICK.

A sum sufficient, I trust, to enable you to support a position that will not compare too unfavourably with that of your elder brother, the Earl of Skene, whose name lives for ever upon more than one prospectus. His Lordship is, I am informed, unmarried and a sad invalid.

ARCHIE.

His nurse sat on him when he was a baby——

DICK.

[*Laughs.*] That's a good one—keep that in.

ARCHIE.

And mother has been doing it ever since.

DICK.

A coronet might, perchance, adorn the brow of my beloved child.

ARCHIE.

[*Warmly ; helping DICK to rise.*] Sir Jonathan, it will be the object of my life to justify this munificence.

DICK.

God bless you, my dear boy.

ARCHIE.

The thing's as easy as pie.

[*Pours himself out a drink and sits in the chair near the French window.*]

DICK.

[*With grimace.*] Is it? They ought to be turning up soon.

ARCHIE.

Anybody else coming beside Fin and my mother?

[*Drinks.*]

DICK.

Jim Palliser!

ARCHIE.

[*Puts glass down on the tea-table in surprise.*] Jim Palliser?

DICK.

Why not? He's one of my oldest pals. Is there any reason why Jim should not come?

ARCHIE.

I'd forgotten he was a pal of yours.

DICK.

I ask, because it happens that I had some difficulty in persuading him.

ARCHIE.

I'm afraid poor old Jim is in Queer Street.

DICK.

He hinted as much. In fact, we are going to talk over his affairs.

ARCHIE.

You're a good old thing, Dick.

[Hooter of a big motor is heard.]

DICK.

[Crossing.] Hullo! Here's Fin, I expect.

ARCHIE.

No, no, no, Dick—Dick—That's the tooter of Sir Jonathan's six-cylinder Purple Emperor for a fiver—not mother's old snorter.

[Takes his glass and puts it on the small table.]

DICK.

Dash it! I wish I'd sent one of mine. *[Crosses.]*

[GRAMSHAW comes out of the hall, followed by SIR JONATHAN DUNNE.]

ARCHIE.

[Sotto voice.] Hang it! Here he is! Where's Dolly?

[He goes back to the tea-table.]

GRAMSHAW.

Sir Jonathan Dunne.

DICK.

Welcome, Sir Jonathan. How are you?

[GRAMSHAW goes back into the house.]

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Stiffly staring at ARCHIE.*] How do you do, Richard?[*They shake hands.*]

DICK.

[*Genially.*] You have met my friend, Archie Mull?

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Austerely.*] I have. [*He bows stiffly to ARCHIE.*] I did not know I was to have the honour of meeting Mr. Mull.

ARCHIE.

[*Cheerfully.*] The honour is mine, Sir Jonathan.[*He lights a cigarette.*]

DICK.

[*To the left of SIR JONATHAN.*] Didn't Miss Dunne come with you?

SIR JONATHAN.

[*As he sits on the right of tea-table.*] No. [DICK and ARCHIE show much concern.] My daughter happens to be staying with some people a mile up the river. She told me that she would punt down to you. [*Both show signs of relief.*] I motored from town.

DICK.

The others will be here soon. Will you have something cooling?

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Not unbending.*] I never drink between meals.

DICK.

[*Genially.*] Ah! Tea will be here directly.

SIR JONATHAN.

I never touch tea. Poison!

DICK.

Oh! Any news in the city?

SIR JONATHAN.

A small run has started on Palliser's.

DICK.

What?

ARCHIE.

[*With much sympathy.*] Poor Jim!

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Contemptuously.*] I do not waste my pity upon that young man. He has neglected a fine business.

DICK.

[*Sitting on the left of SIR JONATHAN.*] You bring bad news, Sir Jonathan. How will it end? As the Chairman of the Amalgamated Association of Bankers, you ought to know, if anybody knows.

SIR JONATHAN.

Precisely. Nobody does knows how these things will end, or who will be affected.

[There is a sound of another motor, evidently an ancient and infirm specimen.]

ARCHIE.

That's mother's tin can.

DICK.

[Jumping up and pushing SIR JONATHAN'S shoulder.]
I'll run away, if you'll excuse me.

[He disappears. ARCHIE shows signs of nervousness ; he whistles. SIR JONATHAN grunts, which stops ARCHIE ; he hums and provokes another grunt from SIR JONATHAN. ARCHIE then goes quickly to the table, drinks from the jug, gets rid of cigarette, and comes quickly down to SIR JONATHAN : and sits on his left. SIR JONATHAN moves away a little.]

ARCHIE.

Oh, I beg your pardon. *[SIR JONATHAN coughs.]* My dear Sir Jonathan——

SIR JONATHAN.

Damn it, sir, don't shout.

ARCHIE.

A gilt-edged opportunity has given me the—er—happy chance and guilty privilege—I should say gilt-edged privilege

of telling you how much I appreciate the gilt—the—er—opportunity of meeting you.

SIR JONATHAN.

Why, may I ask?

ARCHIE.

How do you mean why? [*Plunging desperately.*] Well—er—you must be aware that I've been seeing a lot of Miss Dunne lately.

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Grimly.*] I am.

ARCHIE.

The fact is, I—er—I——

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Sitting bolt upright.*] Yes, sir.

ARCHIE.

I want to marry her.

SIR JONATHAN.

Have you spoken to her?

ARCHIE.

[*Nervously.*] Not yet.

SIR JONATHAN.

Take my advice—*don't*.

ARCHIE.

What! I think she likes me, and——

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Derisively.*] What have you got to offer my only child?

ARCHIE.

Six hundred a year.

SIR JONATHAN.

Left to you, so I've been credibly informed, by your father on the condition that you can't touch the capital till you're forty.

ARCHIE.

Quite true.

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Judicially.*] The late Lord Skene apparently had no confidence in you as a man of business.

ARCHIE.

[*With a disarming smile.*] None whatever. He tied it up as tight as wax.

SIR JONATHAN.

I'm going to deal with you with entire frankness. I would rather not give my daughter to one of the idle rich; I refuse absolutely to entrust her to one of the idle poor.

ARCHIE.

I am not idle from choice.

SIR JONATHAN.

Have you ever earned anything?

ARCHIE.

A few shillings a day, when I was in the Service.

SIR JONATHAN.

Why did you leave your regiment?

ARCHIE.

I was shot——

SIR JONATHAN.

In action?

ARCHIE.

In my back, partridge driving! knocked out for a couple of years. I had to go!

SIR JONATHAN.

Um! Ever earned anything else?

ARCHIE.

A shilling a week as a small boy for not biting my nails.

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Severely.*] This is no moment for levity. [SIR JONATHAN *rises*; ARCHIE *attempts to assist him*. SIR JONATHAN *shakes him off roughly and crosses.*] Doubtless you thought that I should come down handsomely because you are the brother of an impecunious peer.

ARCHIE.

I hoped you would.

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Crossing to the sundial.*] I'm trying to prevent this marriage because I love my child. She and I have been lured here under false pretences——

ARCHIE.

Sir Jonathan!

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Peremptorily.*] I repeat—lured. I'm very much upset at finding you here.

ARCHIE.

[*Sweetly.*] I'm sorry.

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Warming up.*] And I tell you this, sir. I'd sooner give my daughter to one of my clerks, if he had any grit in him, than to you. By Heaven! if Dorothy loved a capable clerk, I'd let him marry her, and push him on to fortune. I can't do that for you. Pardon my frankness.

ARCHIE.

[*Quietly.*] I shall be equally frank with you, Sir Jonathan. Your father, and his father before him, had to work hard for a living.

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Grimly.*] Yes—very hard!

ARCHIE.

What an asset, this inherited instinct to work. I inherited an instinct as strong to shoot and ride to hounds. I know heaps of things which are darkest mystery to you. For instance, if you'll forgive my saying so, you know absolutely nothing about—women.

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Pacing up and down.*] This is too much.

ARCHIE.

I'm speaking as you did, with entire frankness. I sub-

mit, respectfully, that a marriage between your daughter and a man after your own heart, a man of business, would result disastrously for your grandchildren. They'd be little Gradgrinds before they were short-coated.

SIR JONATHAN.

Ha—ha!

ARCHIE.

Now the—how shall I put it?—the blessed pledges of a union between your dear daughter and me would be the happy mean between the useful and the ornamental. Isn't that worth the consideration of a business man?

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Grimly.*] You have some sense in your head. [ARCHIE bows.] Now for the last word. If you want my permission to marry my daughter, you must earn her.

ARCHIE.

How?

SIR JONATHAN.

If Dorothy marries you against my wish, I shan't bluster and threaten, and then come round with my blessing and a settlement. I shall remain [*Fuming*] as I am this moment, perfectly calm, but not a farthing of mine will go to her.

ARCHIE.

How am I to earn her?

SIR JONATHAN.

That is your affair. When you can come to me as the manager of a sound business—I don't care what it is—and

tell me that you are earning £500 a year, I'll give you my daughter and settle £1000 a year on her.

ARCHIE.

I'm much obliged to you.

SIR JONATHAN.

Not at all, and don't thank me. Please tell Richard that I'm—I'm off for a walk.

[He disappears in the direction of the river. ARCHIE looks very blue. DICK comes out of the house. His face is radiant.]

DICK.

Hullo! Where's the great man?

ARCHIE.

I say, that rehearsal of yours was rotten, it queered my whole pitch.

DICK.

Where is he?

ARCHIE.

He describes himself as perfectly calm, but he's wandered off in the devil of a rage.

DICK.

You spoke to him?

ARCHIE.

I did. And he's not a bit deaf. We had a bit of a rough and tumble.

DICK.

[Uneasily.] Well?

ARCHIE.

I'm down and out. He'll give his consent when I go to him and tell him I'm the manager of a sound business and earning £500 a year.

DICK.

[*Centre.*] I don't want to be offensive, but is there any business you could manage?

ARCHIE.

Yes.

DICK.

What?

ARCHIE.

A horse ranch in the Argentine. [*Crosses a little below the table.*] I know all there is to be known about geese, and things are humming out there.

DICK.

[*Sits centre.*] Look here, Archie, this is going to be one of the happiest days of my life!

ARCHIE.

[*Groaning.*] For the Lord's sake, don't swank!

DICK.

By the luck of things, I know a man who wants a manager for a ranch in California—young fellow, straight and fit—and a bit bumptious, who understands horses.

ARCHIE.

I say!

5*

DICK.

If he has somebody to work for in the shape of a girl beyond his giddy horizon, so much the better.

ARCHIE.

Who is your friend, Dick?

DICK.

His name is Richard Jelf.

ARCHIE.

[*Much moved.*] My dear Dick——

DICK.

You'll have to stick to the saddle till you're sore and go on sticking to it.

ARCHIE.

Right.

DICK.

And you must learn to think a darn sight quicker than you talk. [*With a jolly laugh.*] Now bolt off after Sir Jonathan and clap your brand on him before the young lady arrives.

ARCHIE.

[*Incredulously.*] You can't mean it!

DICK.

Don't jaw! Do a bunk! Nail the bargain with Sir Jonathan. [ARCHIE crosses and then comes back to DICK.]

ARCHIE.

You can't mean it! Which way did he go?—Sir Jonathan!

DICK.

[*As ARCHIE is rushing off.*] Archie! Archie!

ARCHIE.

[*Coming back.*] Well, what is it?

DICK.

[*Assuming SIR JONATHAN'S voice.*] Help me out of my chair.

ARCHIE.

[*Rushing off again.*] Oh! go to the devil!

[*He bolts into the shrubbery. DICK is laughing as GRAMSHAWE comes on through the French windows.*]

GRAMSHAWE.

Shall I serve tea now, sir?

DICK.

[*Looking at his watch.*] The ladies will be down in ten minutes, Gramshawe. Bring it then.

GRAMSHAWE.

Very good, sir.

DICK.

Hope you fancy your billet.

GRAMSHAWE.

Yes, sir. Never been treated with more consideration sir. My late master——

DICK.

Yes?

GRAMSHAWE.

Accused me of smoking his cigars, sir.

DICK.

[*Laughing.*] Did you ?

GRAMSHAWE.

I never allowed anyone else to touch them, sir.

[*Shrill scream is heard from the riverside.*]

DICK.

What's that ?

GRAMSHAWE.

Sounds like a female in distress, sir.

[*The scream is heard again.*]

DICK.

[*Standing on a chair.*] Stand quite still. I'll get a boat-hook. [He rushes off.]

MAID.

[*At a window.*] Mr. Gramshawe !

GRAMSHAWE.

[*By the sundial.*] Yes ?

MAID.

What's up ?

GRAMSHAWE.

[*Very leisurely.*] Young lady in difficulties. [He stands, watching the proceedings.]

MAID.

Can you see anything ?

GRAMSHAW.

We're doing all we can.

MAID.

She's not drowning, is she?

GRAMSHAW.

Not yet—nicely—[*Very approvingly*] nicely! We know what we're about, *we* do. Bravo! We're all right now.

MAID.

We! What 'ave you done, Mr. Gramshawe? Can't you swim?

GRAMSHAW.

[*With dignity.*] Only in my own depth, my girl.
[MAID *makes grimace.*] Odd what young ladies will do to attract attention. [*Moves with dignity into the house, as DICK and DOLLY enter from the shrubbery.*]

MAID.

Is it all right, sir?

DICK.

Yes, thank you, Nancy.

[*The MAID disappears.*]

DOLLY.

Lucky you heard me.

DICK.

It's Miss Dunne, isn't it?

[*DOLLY looks slightly hot and dishevelled.*]

DOLLY.

Did I scream loudly?

DICK.

You did.

DOLLY.

It's the first time I've been absolutely alone in a punt.

DICK.

Alone in a punt ! Enough to make any girl scream.

DOLLY.

I told Daddy that I would punt myself down, but crossing the river the current was too strong. I went round and round and round. I lost my head, my temper, and my pole. [*Sinks into a chair.*] And, oh, I'm so thirsty !

DICK.

[*Crosses to the small table and gets a drink.*] Hock cup ?

DOLLY.

Please. I do hope my maid has come ?

DICK.

[*Handing glass.*] I'll inquire presently. Sir Jonathan has gone for a walk.

DOLLY.

Where is Lady Skene ?

DICK.

She'll be down directly. We had a charming talk, Miss Dunne, when we last met. Now we'll have another.

DOLLY.

[*Sipping cup.*] How splendid !

DICK.

[*Flattered.*] Thanks.

DOLLY.

[*Laughing.*] I was praising the hock cup. I say, I want to ask you a question before the others turn up.

DICK.

Certainly. [*He goes back to get himself a drink.*]

DOLLY.

Why is Mr. Jelf called the Kangaroo?

DICK.

I beg your pardon?

DOLLY.

Why is our good host called the Kangaroo?

DICK.

[*Astonished.*] Well—er—he got the nickname at Harrow. I believe, because he was always hopping about.

DOLLY.

Oh! I naturally supposed that he got it because he was a bounder.

DICK.

A bounder?

DOLLY.

And as unconscious of his bounding *as* a kangaroo. See?

DICK.

[*Rather ruefully.*] I see.

DOLLY.

Absolutely between ourselves, when I met him at Hurlingham a fortnight ago, I was not impressed very favourably. Of course, poor dear Fenella must marry a rich man, but after Jim Palliser—[*Laughs.*]

DICK.

[*Sitting beside her.*] After Jim Palliser—

DOLLY.

Surely you must know that Jim and Fenella were head over heels in love with each other a year ago.

DICK.

You don't tell me they were engaged?

DOLLY.

They ought to have been. Lady Skene nipped the affair because poor Jim's bank is in such a rotten state.

DICK.

I was in California last year—I only returned six months ago. Jim Palliser is expected here to-day.

DOLLY.

What? I call that positively indecent.

DICK.

Why did you think this—er—kangaroo—a bounder?

DOLLY.

I'm his guest, and drinking his delicious hock cup, but

all the same we must admit that he's not quite out of the top drawer, eh?

DICK.

[*Persistingly.*] But why a—bounder?

DOLLY.

I'm told that his house in town is furnished in appalling taste?

DICK.

It was furnished by his mother,—I can imagine that a man of feeling wouldn't like to pitch his mother's belongings into an auction-room merely because they might not be what he would have chosen for himself.

DOLLY.

How nice of you to put it that way. Evidently you are his warm friend, and I'm a bounder to discuss him at all.

DICK.

I asked you. What are the marks of the beast?

DOLLY.

If he were sitting in your chair I could pick out several.

DICK.

[*Tartly.*] A critical taste might find as many in me. Is this coat to your fancy? How about my tie?

DOLLY.

[*Laughing.*] Your coat is not to my fancy, and I grieve to see that you wear a ring with a ruby in it, but *you* can wear anything you like.

DICK

[*Derisively.*] In short, a kangaroo may draw big cheques but he mayn't wear them. Who do you think I am, Miss Dunne?

DOLLY.

[*Surprised.*] Lord Venn, to be sure.

DICK.

Unfortunately, I am not Lord Venn. He happened to be with me when I was introduced to you.

DOLLY.

[*Rises.*] Then who are you?

DICK.

[*Rises, bowing.*] The Kangaroo. [*Bursts out laughing.*

DOLLY.

How awful! If it will give you any satisfaction, I'll lie down and let you trample on me.

DICK.

[*Reflectively.*] A perfect gentleman would have told you at once who he was.

DOLLY.

Thank you, sir, for that very comforting thought. Once I overheard a man say that I was a useful little filly, but rather hairy at the heel. Do, please, please, forgive me, as I forgave him. [*She looks coaxingly up into his face.*

DICK.

[*Genially.*] With all my heart.

DOLLY.

[*Nervously.*] You musn't mind what I said about Jim Palliser and Fenella. I was only repeating gossip—ill-natured gossip.

DICK.

I don't believe a word of it; if there'd been anything of that, Jim would have told me—Fin would have told me.

DOLLY.

And she is such a darling!

DICK.

So she is! [*Enter LADY SKENE and FENELLA from the drawing-room; they look cool and charming.*] Miss Dunne has just arrived. I'll hurry up the tea.

[*He disappears into the hall.*]

LADY SKENE.

How do, Honey-pot? Come and kiss me. You look a deal prettier than any heiress has a right to be. What a colour you have, child!

FENELLA.

[*At French window.*] How are you, Dolly?

DOLLY.

Hot but happy.

LADY SKENE.

[*Looking at DOLLY.*] Simple! Madame Prune! I paid the old devil her preposterous bill this morning—tout ce qu'il y a de plus—wow-wow!

[*Crosses.*]

DOLLY.

[*Standing behind a chair.*] Fenella, I congratulate you.

LADY SKENE.

About what?

DOLLY.

He's a perfect duck!

LADY SKENE.

Amenable, poor lad; ugly boots, but amenable.

[*ARCHIE enters from the shrubbery.*

ARCHIE.

Hullo! hullo!

LADY SKENE.

Don't bark, boy!

ARCHIE.

Hullo! mother! Hullo! hullo! hullo! How are you, Miss Dunne?

DOLLY.

Getting cooler.

[*Shakes hands.*

ARCHIE.

How are you, Fin dear? Phew-w-w!

FENELLA.

I'm very well, thank you, Archie.

[*Sits on the left of tea-table.*

LADY SKENE.

What have you been doing, boy?

ARCHIE.

Running after Sir Jonathan.

DOLLY.

[Sits.] Running after Daddy! What for?

ARCHIE.

To—er—to talk about business. Has Jim Palliser turned up?

FENELLA.

Not yet.

LADY SKENE.

[Up aggrieved.] Is Mr. Palliser coming? How very extraordinary!

FENELLA.

He is going to talk over his affairs with Richard and Sir Jonathan.

[Enter GRAMSHAW from the hall with a tea-pot, which he puts on the table. Talk continues as if he were not present.]

ARCHIE.

Jim may not turn up at all. Sir Jonathan reports a small run on his bank.

FENELLA.

A run? Archie, what do you mean?

[Chorus of exclamations.]

LADY SKENE.

[Complacently.] I laid six to four about that a year ago, and no takers.

[Enter PALLISER through the French window. He looks very spick and span in cool grey flannel and brown shoes.]

JELF'S

ARCHIE.

The man himself! Conspicuous and cool!

DOLLY.

How are you, Mr. Palliser? [*Rises and crosses to dial.*

JIM.

[*Pleasantly.*] Don't let me disturb anybody. [*Lifts his hat.*] How-de-do, Lady Skene?

[*ARCHIE crosses to DOLLY with tea.*

LADY SKENE.

Well, Palliser, I never expected to see you here.

JIM.

You refer to my poor bank. Fortunately it was early closing day. Dear old Dick insisted on my coming down. [*Looking round.*] Where is he?

ARCHIE.

Perhaps there are moments—[*FENELLA hands ARCHIE a cup of tea, which he takes to DOLLY*] in Dick's life when Fin's society becomes unbearable.

LADY SKENE.

Dick leaves his guests to amuse themselves.

JIM.

Sound—very.

ARCHIE.

[*Gets plate of bread and butter from the table, hands it to DOLLY, then replaces plate on the table.*] After tea, Miss

Dunne, I hope you'll give your undivided attention to amusing me.

DOLLY.

[*Near the sundial.*] I'll take you out in the punt.

ARCHIE.

I refuse to punt. My mother will tell you that I have an inherited distaste for working between meals.

LADY SKENE.

Inherited from his poor dear father.

DOLLY.

I'll do the punting—that will amuse you.

LADY SKENE.

Boy, why do you pose before Miss Dunne as an aimless and brainless idiot?

[JIM crosses and sits on the right of the tea-table.]

ARCHIE.

[*To LADY SKENE, who is sitting on the left of JIM.*] Miss Dunne, mother, will form her own opinion of me.

DOLLY.

[*With her hand on the sundial.*] She has formed it. Oh, but what a rather nice sundial.

ARCHIE.

[*Kisses her hand.*] Priceless, isn't it?

LADY SKENE.

[*To JIM.*] We saw your two-year-old run at Ascot.

ARCHIE.

Jolly hard luck that objection of Sark's being sustained.

LADY SKENE.

Boy, why don't you talk of what you understand? There never was a more obvious case of bumping.

DOLLY.

Did you back your colt, Mr. Palliser?

JIM.

[*Irritably*]. Back him? I went down the rails on the brute. The last bet I took was five fifties to one from Tom Harkaway. Sark hadn't a bob on his filly. I went to him after the race and asked him not to lodge an objection. He said it wasn't fair on the public.

FENELLA.

[*Quietly*]. And would it have been?

JIM.

[*Derisively*]. Does any man keep a racing stable for the benefit of the public?

ARCHIE.

No fear.

LADY SKENE.

[*Rises*]. Has your colt been out before?

JIM.

I ran him when he wasn't fit once or twice to get a decent market, and now the brute's exposed. Never was so sick in my life.

LADY SKENE.

Well, Palliser, if you run your bank with the same bad luck, shall we call it, as you run your horses, I'm not surprised to hear you are losing customers. [*To the OTHERS.*] It may not interest anyone, but I'm going to put my poor feet into hot water. [*Crosses above the table, and goes out through the French window.*]

DOLLY.

[*To ARCHIE.*] Did you have anything on Jim's colt?

ARCHIE.

No. [*Pleasantly.*] You see, I find my pals put me away so.

DOLLY.

What on earth do you mean?

ARCHIE.

One knows that so many horses ought to win—and for reasons which owners, perhaps, can explain, they're too often left at the post with their *backers*.

FENELLA.

[*Curtly.*] If you are going on the river, Archie, and want to be back for dinner——

ARCHIE.

If Miss Dunne is with me I shan't want to get back.

DOLLY.

If I do the punting, you won't get back.

ARCHIE.

[*To FENELLA.*] Isn't she a little sprink?[*DOLLY and ARCHIE go off through the shrubbery, chaffing and laughing.*]

JIM.

I can see that you are annoyed at my coming here.

FENELLA.

I am. Why did you?

JIM.

To look at you at a distance, which lends fresh enchantment.

FENELLA.

I am serious. Why did you come?

JIM.

An old friend made a point of it.

FENELLA.

[*Scornfully.*] An old friend—did you tell this old friend what has passed between you and me?

JIM.

Certainly not. If I had refused he might have suspected something.

FENELLA.

[*With feeling.*] When our secret engagement was broken off we agreed for both our sakes to keep silence about it. Any gossip would have called attention to the condition of your affairs——

JIM.

[*Cynically.*] And would have brushed the bloom off Lady Fenella Mull.

FENELLA.

[*Hotly.*] You exacted from me a pledge of silence.

JIM.

For your sake, as much as mine.

FENELLA.

[*Rises.*] I ask you to release me from that promise.

JIM.

Let sleeping dogs lie.

FENELLA.

They do lie sometimes. You have tacitly lied to Richard ; you have made me lie by refraining from telling the simple truth.

JIM.

He's not such an ass as to suppose that he was the first, is he ?

FENELLA.

[*Uncertainly.*] I—I don't know.

JIM.

[*Rises.*] I never flattered myself that I was the first.

FENELLA.

[*In a low voice.*] You were.

JIM.

Fin, what was there in me to——

[*Breaks off.*]

FENELLA.

I was very young, my dear Jim, and you *captured* me.

JIM.

[*Centre.*] Ah! [*Smiles.*]

FENELLA.

Some girls are too easily captured. You made a supreme appeal to the eye. I saw you at the Meet of the Four-in-hand Club, driving your own team. I saw you ride at the top of the Cottesmore Hunt when we had that wonderful twenty minutes from Rankesborough. I saw you that Cup Day at Roehampton when you hit the winning goal after your stirrup broke. Do you remember? I was thrilled. Most men would have taken a bad toss. You recovered marvellously. I can see you now. [*Laughs derisively.*] You are a good winner, Jim, a splendid winner, but——

JIM.

[*Hoarsely.*] Go on.

FENELLA.

You do not shine out so conspicuously as a loser. You are nice to horses, and not nice to grooms. I have heard you swear at a waiter and a bookie.

JIM.

[*Approaching.*] My darling girl—— [*Takes her hand.*]

FENELLA.

[*Indignantly.*] How dare you?[*Sits.*]

JIM.

[*Shrugging his shoulders.*] Keep cool. If you make me lose my head, who is to blame? [*Sits.*] I care for you as much as ever. I'd take you from him to-day, if I could offer you anything except an undivided interest in a bank that may be wiped out of existence on Monday.

FENELLA.

Is it as bad as that?

JIM.

Dick has promised to help me. With his help I may weather the storm. Also, he may influence Sir Jonathan. Now, is this the moment to tell him that once you and I promised to marry each other? Wouldn't he ask why the engagement was broken? And then you would have to explain that paupers in our rank of life can't marry. Now do you suppose that Dick would help *me* to get back the prosperity which might break the engagement between him and you? [*He speaks intensely, making his points tell.*] Your silence stands between me and bankruptcy.

FENELLA.

Your prosperity, Jim, would not break my engagement to Richard.

JIM.

[*Incredulously.*] You don't dare to tell me that you care about him for himself alone?

FENELLA.

I—I don't know. I am dazed, muddled. You have made me hate myself. I am absolutely contemptible in my own sight.

JIM.

My poor child——

FENELLA.

I am not a child. I've not behaved like a child. I have always cared too much for things, yes, *things*—and too little for persons. You taught me to care for somebody other than myself. I thank you for that. I loved you, and I'm not ashamed of it. But I did not love you well enough. The things still stood between us, the things broke off our engagement. And the things counted as much with you as with me. Do you deny this?

JIM.

[*Sullenly.*] I was not cad enough to persuade you to chuck things, as you call them, which are necessities of life for you and me.

FENELLA.

[*Recovering her self-control, rises and crosses below the table.*] Quite. And so we dissolved by mutual consent what seemed to be a disastrous partnership. Afterwards——

JIM.

Go on.

FENELLA.

[*Near the sundial.*] I met Richard. I liked him for himself——

JIM.

[*Laughs, rises.*] What?

FENELLA.

And I liked him more for what he represented, I admit that. But, make no mistake, he appealed to me very strongly, because he is simple, and straight, and not cut to pattern.

JIM.

Pray don't spare me. Between you and him lies the barrier of a thousand nameless differences.

FENELLA.

Mole-hills.

JIM.

Mountains.

FENELLA.

I prefer mountains to mole-hills. Mole-hills stood between you and me.

JIM.

We are speaking plainly at last.

FENELLA.

I am.

JIM.

[*Savagely.*] Then, by God, you shall have all the truth from me! I mean to win you back——

FENELLA.

[*Derisively.*] In *his* house.

JIM.

[*Letting himself go.*] In his house, or out of it—anywhere, everywhere. He's the one man living who can put me on my feet again. Once on my feet, I can take care of myself and you. I'm here to fight for you and fortune. I put you first. I want you more than I ever wanted you, and I believe you want me, although you're too damned proud to admit it.

[*DICK appears from the hall.*

FENELLA.

Stop!

[*JIM crosses.*

DICK.

Hullo, Jim?

[*They turn sharply to behold a new DICK. He is very smartly dressed, a sort of understudy of JIM. He is smiling, and looks uncommonly well pleased with himself. His tie and socks match, and are brilliant in colour. He wears white shoes.*

JIM.

[*With an effort.*] Hullo, Dick! [*FENELLA stares at DICK.*]

DICK.

[*In his cheeriest voice.*] Did I hear Fin asking you to stop?

JIM.

Ye-es. Fact is, there was a small run on my bank this morning, nothing—er—of any consequence.

DICK.

But you came down here all the same. That was nice and friendly of you. I've inquired into that Californian Railroad of yours, and it's a sound lock-up, and to-morrow we'll put our heads together—we three, eh, Fin?

JIM.

[*On the left.*] I'm counting on your help, Dick.

DICK.

By Jove, you shall have it. It warms the cockles of my heart to be standing between you two, my best pals.

[*Arm in arm with* FENELLA.

JIM.

Are you serious in saying that you mean to help Palliser's?

DICK.

Rather—it's going to be real jam for me.

JIM.

May I use your telephone?

DICK.

Yes.

JIM.

Thanks.

[*He goes off through the French window.*

FENELLA.

Richard, one moment. What are you doing for Jim?

DICK.

Oh, nothing, nothing. I say, my dearest, what do you think of this kit—what? Rather up and down and round the town, eh? [*With affected walk.*] Several smart people were seen on the towing path. Mr. Richard Jelf, looking like a young Greek god, was wearing a suit of dove grey which was confoundedly tight under the arms.

FENELLA.

[*By sundial.*] Where is your mother's ring.

DICK.

In my dressing case.

FENELLA.

Why did you take it off?

DICK.

Well—er—men, the right sort, don't wear rings with rubies in them. [*Laughs.*] And I never found out till this afternoon that a Kangaroo may draw large cheques, but he mustn't wear 'em. I'm going to tone myself down a bit, eh?

FENELLA.

To please me?

DICK.

I want to trot in your class—what?

FENELLA.

Richard, dear, trot in your own. The man who does the correct thing, and says the correct thing, and wears the correct thing—[*She eyes him smilingly*—is generally an ape. The world is full of apes. It took a good many thousand years to turn apes into men, and it has taken nearly as long to turn men back into apes. You won't do it in twenty-four hours, Richard. [*Sits.*

DICK.

Then you do really like me for myself?

FENELLA.

I like the man who does fine things—not the man who wears them.

DICK.

[*Near her chair, in a low voice.*] You sweet woman, I believe I'm the happiest man on earth. This is going to be a wonderful week-end. I say, my darling—[*His voice grows impassioned*—you haven't anything to tell me, have you?

FENELLA.

What do you mean, Richard?

DICK.

I've knocked about a lot, Fin; and I've been knocked about—by *men*. Out West—on a ranch—one doesn't see many women, not gentlewomen. I'm almost ashamed to tell you that I've never been in love—till now. That's why I'm so beastly bashful. Dash it! I've had no practice.

I'm a tenderfoot when it comes to kissing. Fin, darling, there has never been another woman. Now, dear, have you anything to whisper to me?

FENELLA.

[*Shakes her head.*] Nothing!

DICK.

[*Fervently.*] Thank God! Fin, darling, I've only kissed you once, may I again now, harder than I did before?

FENELLA.

Of course.

DICK.

[*Kissing her cheek.*] Thanks awfully. [*He sits, drawing his chair close to hers as the curtain falls.*]

THE THIRD ACT

The scene is the same as in the Second Act. The time is nine o'clock on the following Sunday evening. Japanese lanterns are stretched across lawn, both tables are taken away. The chairs remain.

[LADY SKENE is seated in the centre, smoking a cigarette. FENELLA is walking about. DOLLY is playing the piano in the drawing-room.]

FENELLA.

What a heavenly evening !

LADY SKENE.

Yes, yes. Sort of night that encourages young people to dabble in matrimony. Ah ! good sign—music.

FENELLA.

What do you mean ?

LADY SKENE.

When your poor dear father was pushed on by my mother to propose to me, I rushed to the piano and sang one of Claribel's most sugary songs.

FENELLA.

Which one ?

LADY SKENE.

"Take back the heart that thou gavest, What is my anguish to thee?"

FENELLA.

What did father do?

LADY SKENE.

He rang the bell for a large brandy and soda. [FENELLA kisses her, as the piano ceases.] Ours was a marriage of inconvenience; the course of love ran smoothly before the ceremony, never after.

FENELLA.

But, mother, you have been happy!

LADY SKENE.

Thanks to an excellent digestion and a sense of humour. [DOLLY enters from drawing-room.] Well, Honey-pot, you made a shocking dinner, child.

FENELLA.

The dinner was funereal!

LADY SKENE.

It would have been if Richard's new *chef* was not a great artist. That *bavaroise au parmesan* will probably touch up my eczema.

FENELLA.

Jim and Sir Jonathan hardly uttered.

DOLLY.

You must blame me for all this.

FENELLA.

You !

DOLLY.

Daddy is chattering with rage, furious with Archie, and furious with Mr. Jelf.

LADY SKENE.

Bless me, why ?

DOLLY.

Because this afternoon Archie offered me what he called the dregs of a misspent life, and I accepted them.

LADY SKENE.

My dear Honey-pot, come and kiss me ! [*DOLLY does so.*] Now I can enjoy my Sandown thoroughly.

FENELLA.

[*Kissing DOLLY.*] Dolly, I'm so glad. But why is Sir Jonathan angry ?

DOLLY.

Oh, he'll soon get over it. But, you see, his pet ambition was to marry me to a man just like himself, bless him !

LADY SKENE.

My God !

DOLLY.

Archie and I owe our happiness to Mr. Jelf. He made the thing possible ; that's why daddy is so waxy with him.

FENELLA.

I see.

LADY SKENE.

Too much consideration for one's father is a sort of reversion to type—a sentimental mistake.

DOLLY.

That sounds awfully immoral, Lady Skene.

LADY SKENE.

I lived in an absurd age which preached morality as successfully as it practised the other thing.

[GRAMSHAWE *enters from the hall.*

GRAMSHAWE.

Mr. Jelf's compliments, my lady, and would you like coffee served on the lawn?

LADY SKENE.

Not on your life!—in the drawing-room.

GRAMSHAWE.

Very good, my lady.

[*He disappears.*

FENELLA.

Mother, have you read to-day's *Observer*?

LADY SKENE.

[*To DOLLY.*] Give me your arm. [*DOLLY helps her to rise.*] My dear, I was brought up never to read newspapers on Sunday.

FENELLA.

It is authoritatively announced that Jelf's Bank is coming to the assistance of Palliser's.

LADY SKENE.

Jim's no fool. [*She goes into the drawing-room.*]

DOLLY.

I'm so glad. I suppose Mr. Jelf is big enough to save poor Jim.

FENELLA.

I wonder whether Richard inserted that paragraph?

ARCHIE.

[*At the dining-room window.*] Hello, hello, hello! .
Where's the coffee?

DOLLY.

[*With gesture.*] In the drawing-room. [*Runs up and kisses ARCHIE.*]

[*SIR JONATHAN, stiff and austere, enters from the hall.*]

FENELLA.

Coffee, Sir Jonathan? [*She crosses to the left.*]

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Centre.*] Thank you, Lady Fenella.

[*FENELLA goes into the drawing-room.*]

DOLLY.

Daddy, aren't you going to kiss me?

SIR JONATHAN.

I always deprecate undue haste in anything.

[*DOLLY kisses him. He melts a little.*]

DOLLY.

I hope Mr. Jelf has given you a good cigar?

SIR JONATHAN.

Exceptionales de Rothschild.

DOLLY.

[*Taking her father by the arm.*] Come into the drawing-room. I'm going to kiss those horrid wrinkles off your forehead.

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Tetchily.*] My hand has been forced!—and I don't like it. You never told me that curly-haired young man would be here.

[*DOLLY leads him off, smiling back at ARCHIE, who has entered with DICK and JIM from the dining-room.*

ARCHIE.

[*To DICK.*] Isn't she a little ripper?

DICK.

[*Smiling.*] Evidently all is well.

[*JIM wanders off towards the shrubbery.*

ARCHIE.

Ra-ther! I tackled Sir Jonathan again after your price-less luncheon. He was very stiff, but he's a man of his word. Also, he made cock-sure that Dolly wouldn't have me.

DICK.

And she did.

ARCHIE.

I tackled *her* after tea—in the boat-house. Made a sad mess of it! But the darling flung her pretty arms round my neck, and whispered that she loved me to distraction. Topping!

DICK.

Sounds very pleasant.

ARCHIE.

I'm the One and Only! Dick, it's the real right thing!—and I owe my happiness to you. All through dinner—*[Chuckles]*—we were squeezing each other's hands and feet!

DICK.

You lucky beggar!

[Sits.]

ARCHIE.

[At the change in DICK's tone, ARCHIE glances at him sharply.] Look here, old man, I know, of course, that Fin has not been very demonstrative, but give her time . . . give her time. I can see that Jim's being here has upset her.

DICK.

Why should that upset her?

ARCHIE.

Good Lord! Surely you know? What? *[Groans.]* Have I let the cat out of the bag?

DICK.

Was there any love-making between Fenella and Jim?

ARCHIE.

[*Squirming.*] Dash it! She ought to have told you.

DICK.

Talk straight, man—was she ever engaged to Jim?

ARCHIE.

Yes.

DICK.

And your mother knocked it on the head?

ARCHIE.

Something of that sort, but . . .

[FENELLA *saunters on to the lawn from the drawing-room.*]

FENELLA.

Are you two going to have coffee?

DICK.

Oh—ah—yes—certainly! I mean, I never touch it.

[*He rises and moves towards the shrubbery.*]

ARCHIE.

I'll go and make myself solid with Sir Jonathan. [*He crosses to the left of FENELLA.*] Be nice to old Dick.

[*ARCHIE goes into the drawing-room, leaving FENELLA staring at DICK.*]

FENELLA.

Really, Richard [*In a low voice*], you are behaving rather oddly, both to-day and yesterday.

DICK.

Am I?

FENELLA.

I can't make you out.

DICK.

I'm a bit of a puzzle to myself.

FENELLA.

Dolly has told me of your great generosity to Archie. And all that's come of it.

DICK.

[*With an effort.*] I helped him to please you.

FENELLA.

Are you helping Jim to please me?

DICK.

[*Evasively.*] You asked me to help him. [*With sudden passion.*] Ever since I first met you I have thought of nothing—nothing but pleasing you. And in return you have let me kiss—your cheek! [*Laughs derisively.*] I've been waiting for a word, a look of encouragement. I did not dare let you see the passion that was consuming me—yes, passion. [*He takes her hands; she silently shrinks from him.*] I thought in my folly that you were a tenderfoot in love like myself. [JIM wanders back from the shrubbery.]

FENELLA.

Richard, are you going mad?

DICK.

[*Curtly.*] No ; I am sane again—that's all !

[*He turns from her abruptly and strides into the drawing-room.*]

JIM.

[*In a low voice.*] That tune ! I thought it was you calling me.

FENELLA.

Do you know who sent that paragraph to the *Observer* ?

JIM.

About Dick standing by Palliser's ? [*She nods.*] I sent it.

FENELLA.

With his permission ?

JIM.

You heard him promise to help me.

FENELLA.

But does he know about it ?

JIM.

My dear girl, that paragraph only concerns Dick and me.

FENELLA.

It concerns me vitally. Do you know that I asked Dick to help you ?

JIM.

When ?

FENELLA.

Last Tuesday at his bank.

JIM.

How awfully sweet of you ! [*He approaches nearer.*]

FENELLA.

You ought to have got his permission before sending anything to the papers.

ARCHIE.

[*Off.*] Come along, Dolly !

JIM.

Business is business. I know Dick.

FENELLA.

I wish that I did.

JIM.

What do you mean ?

FENELLA.

I can't see him clearly. Yesterday he made an absurd attempt to understudy—you !

JIM.

Do you expect me to blame him for that ? A little polish will do him no harm.

FENELLA.

[*Scornfully.*] Polish ! I'm sick of polish, sick of this fetish for appearance. You've not played the game. I shall warn Richard to leave you and your affairs alone.

JELF'S

JIM.

Suppose I warn him to leave *you* and your affairs alone?

FENELLA.

Is it possible that I once thought you were nearly perfect?

JIM.

For God's sake, Fenella, do nothing rashly! Try to remember that my back is to the wall.

[ARCHIE and DOLLY appear from the hall.

ARCHIE.

Dick, somebody has turned up in a taxi. Dick! Dick! somebody's turned up in a taxi! [DICK enters from the drawing-room.] Dolly and I are going to look for that nightingale. [They stroll into the shrubbery.

[DICK comes on to the lawn, followed by LADY SKENE. GRAMSHAW enters from the hall, followed by WINSLOW, in morning-dress.

GRAMSHAW.

[Announcing.] Mr. Winslow.

[He disappears.

DICK.

Hullo, Winslow—what's up?

WINSLOW.

I have motored from town upon a matter of urgent importance.

JIM.

[*On the right.*] How are you, Mr. Winslow?

WINSLOW.

[*Bowing stiffly.*] Reasonably well, Mr. Palliser.

LADY SKENE.

Who is this?

DICK.

My head clerk, Adam Winslow—Lady Skene—

LADY SKENE.

How-do? [DICK *indicates a chair.*] What does he want?

WINSLOW.

[*Turns to DICK.*] Pardon the unseasonable intrusion, but—
[*He glances at the others.*]

FENELLA.

Shall we leave you, Richard?

DICK.

[*Abruptly.*] Hold hard! [*They turn in some astonishment; he continues in a tense voice.*] Winslow, is this urgent business connected with Mr. Palliser?

WINSLOW.

It is.

DICK.

Then I invite you people to listen to it.

LADY SKENE.

[*Petulantly.*] My dear boy, what has Mr. Palliser's business got to do with Fenella and me?

DICK.

[*Grimly.*] More, perhaps, than you think. Please remain.

[WINSLOW *frowns, shrugging his shoulders.*

DICK.

[*To WINSLOW.*] Sir Jonathan Dunne happens to be staying here.

WINSLOW.

[*Stiffly.*] Sir Jonathan's advice in this emergency will be most welcome.

DICK.

Can I offer you anything, Winslow—coffee—a cigar?

WINSLOW.

Nothing, I thank you. [*He slowly twiddles his thumbs.*

DICK.

[*Crosses and calls.*] Sir Jonathan! Sir Jonathan!
[SIR JONATHAN *appears from the drawing-room.*

DICK.

Winslow has motored from town on urgent business connected with Palliser's bank.

WINSLOW.

Good evening, Sir Jonathan.

SIR JONATHAN.

Good evening, Mr. Winslow. Urgent business? I think I can guess the nature of it.

WINSLOW.

No doubt.

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Formally.*] I'm at your service, Richard.

DICK.

Thanks. [SIR JONATHAN *sits on the left. From the expression on his face it will be obvious that he is annoyed.*] Now, Winslow, what is it?

WINSLOW.

I protest——

DICK.

[*Irritably, cutting him short.*] Protest is written all over your face in indelible ink. I repeat, what's up?

WINSLOW.

[*Taking a clipping from his pocket and putting on a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles.*] My attention was called to this late this afternoon——

JIM.

[*Standing near the sundial.*] My dear Dick, as this matter concerns me, don't you think that it ought to be discussed privately?

SIR JONATHAN.

Quite so.

DICK.

If a man's business follows him, and overtakes him when he's with his pals, and if that business happens to concern them very intimately, I think they should stand by him.

FENELLA.

Yes.

DICK.

Go on, Winslow !

WINSLOW.

The *Observer* has the following paragraph——

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Grimly.*] I read it after breakfast.

WINSLOW.

Surely, Sir Jonathan, it surprised you ?

SIR JONATHAN.

Nothing surprises me, Mr. Winslow.

DICK.

[*Impatiently.*] What paragraph are you talking about ?

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Surprised indeed.*] Surely *you* sent it ?

DICK.

I've sent no paragraphs to any paper. Read it, man.

WINSLOW.

[*Reading aloud.*] "We are given to understand, upon the most unimpeachable authority, that Jelf's private bank has signified its intention of supporting Palliser's—if the run on that bank continues on Monday."

DICK.

[*Startled.*] Unimpeachable authority?

JIM.

[*Nervously.*] Mine. I felt justified in doing so, after your generous promise of assistance.

DICK.

My dear Jim, I'm not a fool, I meant privately; you must have understood that.

JIM.

No, I didn't take it that way. That paragraph will stop the run. Mr. Winslow will admit that?

[*Glances at WINSLOW.*

WINSLOW.

Yes.

SIR JONATHAN.

Unquestionably.

[*Purses up his lips, frowning.*

DICK.

You are sure of that? Good.

WINSLOW.

[*To DICK.*] Are you prepared to shoulder the responsibility?

DICK.

Why not?

SIR JONATHAN.

Good God!

DICK.

I beg your pardon, Sir Jonathan?

SIR JONATHAN.

[*With extreme irritability.*] All this is very irregular. I confess that the paragraph in question upset me this morning, although it did not surprise me.

DICK.

Why did it upset you?

SIR JONATHAN.

[*More and more testily.*] Young man, Mr. Winslow will inform you that I am one of your largest depositors, as trustee for a minor.

WINSLOW.

Yes.

SIR JONATHAN.

But I prefer to speak, not as a depositor, but as the chairman of the Amalgamated Association of Bankers. [*He speaks very pompously, pursing up his lips and slightly inflating his cheeks.*]

DICK.

[*Politely.*] In either capacity, Sir Jonathan, I shall listen with the greatest interest to anything you are kind enough to say.

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Solemnly.*] I look upon Jelf's Bank as a National Institution. As for Palliser's——

JIM.

Spare your sneers, Sir Jonathan!

SIR JONATHAN.

Palliser's—and I have no wish to be offensive—is negligible. The closing of its doors on Monday will not affect other banks, unless—— [Pauses significantly.]

DICK.

Yes?

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Emphatically.*] Unless a panic is started by a sound institution identifying itself with one that is unsound.

JIM.

My bank is not unsound.

SIR JONATHAN.

If the public believes it to be so, it is so.

DICK.

[*Up centre, incredulously.*] Do you mean to tell me that Jelf's cannot help a small bank in temporary difficulties?

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Sitting left.*] No sound business can bolster an unsound one without affecting its credit. Injure that credit at a

time like this, when all banks are writing off large amounts for depreciation, and I do not dare to predict what the consequences might be—even to Jelf's.

WINSLOW.

[*Right of Dick.*] That is my excuse for intruding upon you, Mr. Jelf. It is all-important that this paragraph should be contradicted in the morning papers. The formes of most of them go to press at two.

DICK.

[*With a hard laugh.*] You ask me to break a promise?

SIR JONATHAN.

That paragraph will stop the run on Palliser's, but it may start a run on *you*. [Stares fixedly at Dick.]

DICK.

[*Startled.*] A run on Jelf's! Why?

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Very impressively.*] Because the business world will think that Jelf's is—mismanaged.

WINSLOW.

[*Hastily.*] Sir Jonathan does not mean for a moment that Jelf's is not strong enough to meet its obligations and the obligations of Palliser's, but no bank can stand a big run. We carry an immense reserve, but it would melt like snow were our credit imperilled.

DICK.

[*Slowly.*] If that paragraph should be contradicted——

JIM.

[*Vehemently.*] My bank won't open to-morrow.

DICK.

[*Quietly.*] I shan't contradict it.

WINSLOW.

I regret it. There is nothing left for me to do, Mr. Jelf, but to tender my resignation as head clerk.

DICK.

Your . . . resignation?

WINSLOW.

I worked for your uncle for twenty years, sir. I know that he would have refused to help Palliser's publicly, although privately he might have done what he could.

SIR JONATHAN.

Pre-cisely.

WINSLOW.

My reputation as a conservative man of business is at stake.

DICK.

[*Fiercely.*] You want to bolt, do you?

JIM.

You had better authorise Mr. Winslow to contradict that paragraph.

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Emphatically.*] That is my opinion also.

DICK.

[*To* LADY SKENE.] What do you say, Lady Skene?

LADY SKENE.

Don't ask me, Richard. I'm only a stupid old woman.

DICK.

I have my reasons for asking these questions. [*To* LADY SKENE.] I did promise to help Jim, and I want to help Jim, although I knew nothing of that paragraph.

LADY SKENE.

[*Rising.*] Take my tip, business is business, and you can't mix it up with sentiment. [*To* SIR JONATHAN.] Give me a hand, man. [SIR JONATHAN *helps her to rise.*] You must count me out of this, my dear Richard. Good night. [*She retreats into the drawing-room.*]

DICK AND OTHERS.

Good night.

SIR JONATHAN.

Lady Skene is a woman of sense.

DICK.

[*Calmly.*] What do you say, Fenella?

JIM.

Why ask her?

SIR JONATHAN.

Why, indeed?

[*Snorts.*]

DICK.

You belong to the Upper Class. Without any disrespect to my uncle's memory, I believe that he would contradict this particular paragraph if he were alive.

SIR JONATHAN.

Not a doubt of it!

DICK.

But I have had advantages denied to my uncle. And if it is my privilege to touch the fringe of nobility through my future wife, it is also my right to ask her what nobility does in such an emergency.

FENELLA.

[*Sitting.*] A promise is a promise.[*DICK glances at JIM, who shows unmistakable relief.*]

DICK.

Thank you. You would keep a promise, Fenella, even though your heavens fell?

FENELLA.

[*Almost inaudibly.*] I hope so.

DICK.

Thank you again. [*To WINSLOW.*] I accept your resignation, Mr. Winslow. Paragraph that if you like.

WINSLOW.

Mr. Jelf, I entreat you to reconsider——

DICK.

I will meet you at the bank to-morrow morning. Charles Perkins will take your place.

WINSLOW.

I wish you good night, sir.

[He bows stiffly and is moving away when DICK follows him.]

DICK.

[Holding out his hand, and in a genial, kind voice.] I don't blame you, Winslow. You are an honest man, who has served us faithfully. I cannot understand your resignation. Good luck to you!

[They shake hands and WINSLOW disappears into the hall.]

SIR JONATHAN.

[Crossing.] I protest against this—this quixotic resolution. I have no desire, young man, to interfere with your affairs, although you have chosen to interfere with mine.

DICK.

I *know* that Jelf's is big enough to help Palliser's.

SIR JONATHAN.

[Eyeing him coldly.] You *know* that, do you? When you reach my age, you'll find many young men who will think they *know* more than you do. Good night.

[He walks into the drawing-room with pompous dignity.]

DICK.

Thank God, that's over!

FENELLA.

Richard . . .

DICK.

Poor Winslow! You could put what grit he's got into a grain of mustard seed and hear it rattle.

JIM.

[*Crossing to DICK, who is near the dining-room.*] My dear old Dick, you are positively the apex of the world's pyramid of trumps!

DICK.

[*Coldly.*] Thanks.

JIM.

You have made me bankrupt—in gratitude.

FENELLA.

Why have you done this?

DICK.

Will you leave me alone with Jim for a few minutes? And then I'll try to answer your question. [FENELLA *hesitates and goes into the drawing-room.* DICK *squares his shoulders and speaks in a firm, masterful voice.*] Jim, why didn't you tell me last Tuesday that Fin and you had been engaged?

JIM.

I was so—so—*confounded*—that I simply couldn't. Besides—

DICK.

Yes?

JIM.

Fin and I had agreed to keep silent about it for her sake and mine. The engagement was broken off on account of my affairs.

DICK.

No other reason?

JIM.

None.

DICK.

[*Reflectively.*] I see. Now—what is to be done about it?

JIM.

Done about it?

DICK.

The circumstances are very awkward. Can't we face 'em like sensible men? Can't we talk matters over quietly?

JIM.

[*Uneasily.*] I don't know. I repeat, I'm eternally your debtor.

DICK.

[*Curtly.*] I have not done this for you. You owe me nothing except—plain speech. [JIM *sits C.* DICK *sits L. of him.*] Do you love Fenella?

JIM.

I—I——

DICK.

[*Fiercely.*] Man, do you *love* her?

JIM.

Yes.

DICK.

I shall try to talk as straight as *you* ride. I want to understand you and her. I think I do understand myself. Are you prepared to marry her?

JIM.

If my fortunes mend.

DICK.

Why do you want her? What do you ask from your future wife?

JIM.

I want a—pal—a— Damn it!—I can't discuss her like this!

DICK.

You must! Go on. What else besides a pal?

JIM.

[*Cornered.*] I believe I can make her happy, give her what she loves.

DICK.

Children?

JIM.

[*Slowly.*] My dear fellow! I never thought of that. She's as keen on hunting as I am. Goes like a bird, too.

DICK.

Does she want children?

JIM.

I don't know. [*Irritably.*] My good chap, one doesn't touch on that sort of thing with a refined girl like Fenella Mull. You're rather—brutal.

DICK.

Brutal, am I? I feel brutal. I'm very fond of you, Jim, but I wish at this moment that you were in—well—heaven. Look here, I saw you the other night at the Savoy with a girl. I'm not throwing stones at you, or swanking, but I know nothing of that. I can't understand you men who treat the most wonderful thing in the world as if it were a game of kiss-in-the-ring. Perhaps my energies have been satisfied with ranching and banking. You think that I talk coarsely, but, by God! I don't feel coarsely, and I'm a faithful sort of chap. I want Fenella desperately—I want other things—but she comes first. All the same I couldn't buy a wife. That sickens me, do you understand? I love her. I've not fallen *in* love with the betting 5 to 1 that I shall fall *out* in a few months. It's not a passing phase with me. You made up to Dolly Dunne.

JIM.

What?

DICK.

Come! Didn't you? She's a dear. There—I don't blame you. But I must find out what Fin wants—*now*.

JIM.

[*Shrugging his shoulders.*] You had better ask her.

DICK.

I mean to ask her—when I've done with you. [*Rises.*]

JIM.

[*Rises.*] Your tone is not pitched in quite the right key to—to unlock confidence.

DICK.

[*Impatiently.*] What can you give Fenella that I can't?

JIM.

[*Shrinking.*] I feel a sort of delicacy——

DICK.

Delicacy be damned! When you're riding to win you don't worry about your neck, do you?

JIM.

[*Nervously.*] I can surround her with the right sort of people.

DICK.

Sure they *are* the right sort?

JIM.

My own mother's people.

DICK.

[*Reflectively.*] Yes; some of 'em are the right sort.

JIM.

We have similar tastes in—er—things—surroundings—all that.

DICK.

True enough.

JIM.

They count.

DICK.

That's just it. Do they count with her? [*Crosses to drawing-room.*] Fenella! [JIM *betrays irritation.*] Fin—?

FENELLA.

[*Off.*] I'm here. [FENELLA *enters.*]

DICK.

I must ask you some questions.

JIM.

Not before me.

DICK.

Yes. [JIM *offers FENELLA a chair and she sits.*] Fin dear, you would keep a promise although your heavens fell?

FENELLA.

How oddly you say that!

DICK.

[*A pause.*] Didn't you promise to marry Jim?

FENELLA.

Yes.

DICK.

He still hopes to marry you. [*To JIM.*] Tell her what you can offer, if things go right with the bank.

JIM.

We are not in California, my good fellow.

DICK.

Jim's afraid that I'm going to pull out a shilling and propose to toss for you. I saw that done once in a mining camp.

FENELLA.

The woman was willing to take the winner, was she?

DICK.

[*Angrily.*] Most women prefer winners. She was primitive, and I'm primitive. Now, sail in, Jim. [*Derisively.*]

JIM.

[*With decision.*] If you insist—I will—under protest. [*Crosses and sits on the arm of a chair to the left of FENELLA.*] I do want you, Fin, and I believe that I shall make you happier than Dick can. I ask you to be my pal—to play with me the game of life, as we two know how to play it, as we have been *trained* to play it. I want you to hunt with me. I love to see you outside a good horse—a real good 'un—going with the best, over a stiff country. You love racing—so do I. You like yachting—so do I. You want a front seat at all the big shows, don't you?—so do I. Our tastes always agree—we laugh at the same jokes.

FENELLA.

Out of politeness sometimes.

JIM.

That's true. I admire you more than any woman I know.

DICK.

Jim wants his friends to admire you too—as the smartest woman in London.

JIM.

Why not?

DICK.

I want——

JIM.

Hold hard, Kangaroo!

DICK.

Kangaroo, eh? I see you consider I haven't behaved like a—a——

JIM.

Good night, Fin.

FENELLA.

Good night, Jim.

JIM.

If I pull through, Fin, I'll speak to you again. [*Crosses to DICK.*] Dick—you have made that possible. You told me to talk as straight as I ride. Well—I was the first with Fin—ask her. [*He passes into the hall.*]

DICK.

Was he the first?

FENELLA.

Yes.

DICK.

Why did you lie to me yesterday?

FENELLA.

I hated to lie, Richard, but Jim had his back to the wall.

DICK.

You lied for his sake. What would I not give to have you lie for mine! You've heard what Jim said. He wants a pal to play about with at Melton, Monte, Cowes, Newmarket. I could give you all that. His people are the right sort, and some of mine aren't. Jim wants his friends to admire you as Lady Fenella Palliser, the smartest woman in England. Oh, I'm not sneering! [*Sits on the arm of the chair on the left of her.*] I—I want our children to admire you. [*A pause.*] I don't intend to spend my Christmases in smart restaurants, but at home, and I shan't be motoring about the Riviera when our boys come back from Harrow. I want a mate, Fin, but one who will work with me as well as play. I've a colossal desire to belong to that much ridiculed class—the backbone of England. You meet the men coming out of unsmart hotels, and they speak with an accent that smells of Manchester, but I love 'em, because they're justifying their existence, and nothing else counts. I should like to tackle Parliament. The men who love England most are those who have to live out of it. I spent ten years in California, and, by gum, what do they know of England

that only England know? I wonder if you realise how tremendously I care for you! Now, who are the men to whom you women surrender unconditionally? The charming slackers! I can't believe that. The strivers! Yes, the fellows who, win or lose, fight to a finish. [*Rises.*] Now you know what Jim wants; and you know what I want. Tell me, you beautiful strong woman, what you want.

FENELLA.

I still want things, Richard, all those nice things that you could give me, but what else—what else—what else? Things will not be enough, I am getting tired of—of my child's paradise, and Columbines all of a row. I am bored with the people who do nothing but amuse themselves. I feel contemptible when I admit that I cannot put into words exactly what I do want. Is it independence of judgment which so few of us women have? Is it more time to think? Sometimes I am terrified! [*Rises.*]

DICK.

Terrified?

FENELLA.

Do you know that line, "The gay to-morrow of the mind that never comes"? If it should never come to me!

DICK.

It will come, Fin.

FENELLA.

You have shown me to-night a new and strange Richard. I've not met anybody just like you. I have never been

quite at my ease with you. I've never been quite at my ease with Jim; he *captured* me, swept me off my feet, and a minute ago you almost captured me.

DICK.

Fin!

FENELLA.

[*Sadly.*] *Almost*—not absolutely. With your big interests, where do I come in? Can I cope with your ambitions? I could, of course, if——

DICK.

If?

FENELLA.

[*Slowly.*] If I loved you as you deserve to be loved.

DICK.

[*Steadily.*] I am not a cold man, Fin. Make no mistake about that. I could not be happy with a cold woman. When I asked you what you wanted, I hoped that you would say you wanted *me*. [*He seizes her hand.*] Will the day ever come when you'll want me as I want you? [*Silence. She stands with bent head; he kisses her hand, as the sound of a gramophone is heard from a river steamer.*] I understand.

[*Voices are heard from the shrubbery. DICK and FENELLA move apart. DOLLY rushes in, pursued by ARCHIE. They stop abruptly by the sundial when they see DICK and FENELLA.*]

DOLLY.

[*Crossing to FENELLA and kissing her.*] Good night, Fin.
I am simply dead-beat with excitement!

ARCHIE.

And triumph!

FENELLA.

Good night, Dolly. [*Kisses her.*]

DOLLY.

[*Going to DICK.*] Good night, Mr. Jelf. Archie and I
owe all our happiness to you. [*She shakes hands with DICK
and then nods to ARCHIE.*] Good night, Archie.
[*Crosses to French window.*]

ARCHIE.

You stuffy old thing! Aren't *we* engaged? Aren't
they engaged? Come on!

[*He holds out his arms. DOLLY hesitates, laughs,
trips back and turns her cheek. ARCHIE takes
her in his arms and hugs her manfully, kissing
her lips.*]

DOLLY.

Dear Archie! [DOLLY runs off into the drawing-room.]

FENELLA.

Well, I must be going up now. [*Kisses ARCHIE.*]
Good night, Archie. [*Crosses to DICK.*] Good night.

ARCHIE.

Sorry! . . . Smoke a cigar with you later, Dick.

[He goes into the hall, moves slowly towards the drawing-room.]

DICK.

[Near the sundial.] Fenella!

FENELLA.

[Crossing back to him.] You feel things so strongly. I long to feel like that, but I don't—I don't. Richard dear, I know I've hurt you horribly, but you are strong, and you have your work, haven't you?

DICK.

Yes, my old bank—Jelf's. *[Kisses her hand.]*

[FENELLA walks slowly into the drawing-room.]

DICK pulls his pipe out of his pocket, strikes a match on his boot, lights his pipe and disappears into the hall as the curtain falls.

THE FOURTH ACT

The scene is the same as in the First Act ; and the time is 8.45 o'clock on the Tuesday following.

[Curtain discloses the big centre doors open. DICK is standing by WINSLOW's table looking at a book. He crosses to his desk after two clerks go out. Through the centre doors the audience will see the clerical department, and hear the hum of MEN at work. PERKINS comes from the strong-room ; TWO CLERKS with bags of money follow him and disappear into the bank. PERKINS crosses and closes the doors. DICK sits.]

PERKINS.

The Bullion Book.

DICK.

You look worried, Perkins.

PERKINS.

[By DICK's desk.] I feel worried, sir.

DICK.

I feel worried, but I hope I don't look it.

PERKINS.

No, sir.

DICK.

Where are we after yesterday's run?

PERKINS.

Nearing the danger line, Mr. Jelf.

DICK.

How do you know that?

PERKINS.

I feel it, Mr. Jelf. Inside.

DICK.

Perkins, do you happen to know if any of our important customers are getting uneasy?

PERKINS.

[*Fidgeting.*] They must be, Mr. Jelf.

[*He goes into the bank, followed by DICK.—FENELLA and FAGGE enter from the right.*]

FAGGE.

Lady Fenella Mull . . . I'll go and tell Mr. Jelf.

[*He goes into the bank. FENELLA crosses to DICK's desk.*]

DICK.

[*Off.*] Let me know at once if there is a change.

PERKINS.

[*Off.*] Yes, Mr. Jelf.

DICK enters.

FENELLA.

[*By desk.*] Richard!—I had to come—I——[*He meets her gravely; she takes his hand.*]

DICK.

Jim is all right?

FENELLA.

I know—I know—Richard, are you safe?

DICK.

My fortunes are on the knees of the gods.

FENELLA.

[*Nervously.*] Sir Jonathan said on Sunday that no bank could stand a continuous run.

DICK.

[*Sitting at his desk.*] It can't. Not even the Bank of England.

FENELLA.

[*Sinks into a chair near Winslow's desk.*] Then, if this run should continue——?

DICK.

[*With his eye steadily on her.*] Yes?

FENELLA.

You may be ruined. The truth, *please*?

DICK.

I may be badly crippled. [*In a firm voice.*] But my customers would be paid twenty shillings in the pound.

FENELLA.

You have means outside the bank?

DICK.

Jelf's is a private bank. I am liable to the last farthing. What liquid assets I had went into the bank this morning.

[FAGGE *enters from the bank.*

FAGGE.

Bulger would like to see you, Mr. Jelf.

DICK.

Send him in.

[FAGGE *retires.*

FENELLA.

Who's Bulger?

DICK.

Our private policeman. [*Enter the private policeman, BULGER, and PERKINS.*] Morning, Bulger. What's up?

BULGER.

[*In a throaty voice.*] Fleet Street, sir, is gettin' blocked. Marvellous crowd, sir.

DICK.

Disorderly?

BULGER.

In streaks, sir. The worst is them as come from the country. Keep a arskin' me orkard questions . . . Any instructions, sir?

DICK.

Yes. Show them our sign outside the bank.

BULGER.

Our *sign*, sir?

DICK.

Tell 'em that it has hung over our door for more than two centuries.

BULGER.

Yessir.

DICK.

Interpret it.

BULGER.

[*Scratching his chin.*] Beg pardon, sir?

DICK.

Explain the meaning of it—a dish made of oak, and like Jelf's, because it lasts and *never breaks*.

BULGER.

Never breaks! Lor, sir, to think that I've bin 'ere ten years and never knew the meaning of our sign! *Never breaks!*

DICK.

Bulger, let our customers into the bank same as yesterday, thirty at a time.

BULGER.

Yessir.

[*Salutes and goes out as FAGGE enters.*]

FAGGE.

Sir Jonathan Dunne would like to see you, sir. He is at the private entrance.

PERKINS.

[*Crossing.*] Sir Jonathan Dunne!

DICK.

[*Sitting.*] Perkins, will you bring Sir Jonathan in?

[FAGGE *returns to the bank.* PERKINS *hurries off on the right.*

FENELLA.

I ought to go.

DICK.

[*Keenly.*] Yes.

FENELLA.

I have more to say.

DICK.

[*Rises.*] Do you mind going into one of the waiting rooms? No, I should like you to be present.

FENELLA.

Why?

DICK.

Because I want you every minute of the day, and now that I've lost you I want you more than ever I did. [FENELLA *sits.* DICK *crosses and sits at desk L.* Enter SIR JONATHAN and PERKINS through the right-hand door. SIR JONATHAN *appears very grim.* His coat is tightly buttoned and his lips are compressed. PERKINS *crosses to cupboard.*] How are you, Sir Jonathan?

SIR JONATHAN.

Good morning, Richard. Good morning, Lady Fenella.
The Governor of the Bank of England is here.

FENELLA.

The Governor of the Bank of England?

DICK.

Shall I ask him to come in?

SIR JONATHAN.

No. At his request I wish to interview you first.

FENELLA.

[*Hurriedly.*] Richard——

DICK.

Do you particularly wish to see me alone?

SIR JONATHAN.

There can be no objection to Lady Fenella being present
as your future wife. So you're in command, Mr. Perkins?

PERKINS.

Second in command, Sir Jonathan.

SIR JONATHAN.

Winslow bolted, hey?

DICK.

He thinks that his resignation on conservative grounds
will give him strength. Perkins tells me there was another
reason.

SIR JONATHAN.

Um?

PERKINS.

[*Deferentially.*] Mr. Winslow has been offered the Presidency of a Bank in the West of Canada.

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Sharply.*] Have you paragraphed that?

DICK.

No.

SIR JONATHAN.

Are you going to paragraph it?

DICK.

No.

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Sits on the left of DICK's desk.*] I've a lot of trust money with you, Richard. [*To PERKINS.*] How much?

PERKINS.

I can tell you the exact amount, Sir Jonathan, in half a minute. [*Prepares to go out.*]

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Raising a plump white hand.*] Wait, please! [*To DICK.*] The money, more than £200,000, was deposited on special terms.

DICK.

You know all about that, Perkins.

PERKINS.

As Chief Correspondent Clerk I have not the details at my tongue's tip, but I think I remember the terms.

DICK.

State them.

[SIR JONATHAN *raises his hand to his ear and leans forward, attentively.*]

PERKINS.

[*To* DICK.] In view of the large amount deposited, your late uncle, Mr. Jelf——

SIR JONATHAN.

What, what !

PERKINS.

[*To* SIR JONATHAN.] In view of the large amount deposited, your late uncle—I should say Mr. Jelf's late uncle—allowed you a special rate of four per cent. for two years, instead of the current rate which varies naturally according to the bank rate.

SIR JONATHAN.

Just so.

PERKINS.

The amount was subject to withdrawal at the usual seven days' notice.

DICK.

[*Indicates relief.*] Good !

SIR JONATHAN.

Until two years had expired.

DICK.

[*With a certain anxiety.*] When was this amount deposited?

PERKINS.

I am not quite sure of the exact date.

DICK.

Please fetch the deposit ledger. I will look at Sir Jonathan's account at once.

PERKINS.

Very good, sir.

[*As he goes through the centre doors, the hum of the department is heard.*]

DICK.

Hungry crowd waiting for our doors to open.

SIR JONATHAN.

I hear that the run on Palliser's is at an end.

DICK.

Yes.

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Stroking his chin.*] You acted too rashly on Sunday night.

DICK.

[*Firmly.*] My word was pledged.

SIR JONATHAN.

Ah! sentiment ought never to interfere with business. In this case you had others to consider—myself, for instance.

DICK.

[*Boldly.*] I did consider you, Sir Jonathan. The heavy depositors like yourself know what is behind this bank.

SIR JONATHAN.

Behind the bank?

DICK.

My private fortune. If I doubted the good faith of men who are not only our best customers but also friends of my late uncle, I should put up the shutters at once.

[*Enter the LEDGER CLERK, carrying a large, handsomely bound ledger. The CLERK places the ledger on DICK's desk, and in front of him, and stands behind DICK. PERKINS, who has followed CLERK, remains standing. During the talk that follows PERKINS indicates nervousness.*

DICK.

[*Opening ledger.*] C . . . C . . . D . . . Here we are—Dunne. [*Reads and then looks up.*] Yes—£248,000 was deposited at a fixed rate of four per cent. upon the 5th of June two years ago.

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Gravely.*] Yes.

DICK.

Hullo! The account is closed.

CLERK.

Transferred, Mr. Jelf. [*Coughs.*]

DICK.

Why?

PERKINS.

Because the two years have expired. It's now on the current account.

DICK.

The *current* account. Then all of it is subject to withdrawal?

PERKINS.

[*Nervously.*] Yes, Mr. Jelf,—[*Blows his nose very nervously*], at call.

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Suavely.*] Thank you.

DICK.

That will do. [CLERK *retires with the ledger.*] If you'll excuse me, Sir Jonathan, before we open I must address the staff.

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Watching DICK keenly.*] You can instruct your cashiers to stave off the crowd by paying each depositor in turn, and with as much delay as possible.

PERKINS.

Yes—yes—admirable!

DICK.

[*Politely.*] Wouldn't such a course smack too strongly of weakness?

SIR JONATHAN.

I shall be interested to hear what you say to your staff.

DICK.

Perkins, open those doors. [DICK *rises*, PERKINS *opens the big doors*. *Murmur of CLERKS*.]

PERKINS.

Gentlemen, silence—if you please!

DICK.

[*Addressing the Staff in a clear, ringing voice.*] Gentlemen!—In one minute we open our doors to the crowd waiting outside. You all know what to expect at the hands of our patrons. I say patrons advisedly, because this big business has been built up by innumerable small depositors, and they are entitled to our consideration and courtesy. [SIR JONATHAN *sits bolt upright, with his attention obviously challenged.*] Some of our depositors will abuse that courtesy, but please remember that I expect from every man in my service not only civility towards our panic-stricken customers, but also that patience and kindness which rise superior to the rudeness and insolence of a mob. Mr. Perkins, you will see to it that half a dozen extra clerks will serve as cashiers at the paying counters. The ordinary business will be suspended. We will receive money and pay out money. Put a notice outside to the effect that Jelf's will, if necessary, remain open till eight

o'clock to-night. And if so, I hope you will all dine with me.

[Cries of "Thank you, sir!" from the STAFF.]

PERKINS closes the big doors and goes back into the bank. DICK returns to his desk.

SIR JONATHAN.

Is that the way they conduct business out West?

DICK.

I don't know, Sir Jonathan; it's the way I conduct my business.

SIR JONATHAN.

Have you a memorandum of how you stand?

DICK.

Here is a rough balance sheet.

SIR JONATHAN.

May I show it to the Governor of the Bank of England?

DICK.

Yes. *[SIR JONATHAN goes out on the right as PERKINS opens the centre doors. DICK and he stand watching the CROWD enter.]* Here they are! *[DICK goes back to his desk. Presently PERKINS closes doors.]*

PERKINS.

[Very white.] Will that trust money remain with us?

DICK.

Sir Jonathan has not withdrawn his deposit . . .
[PERKINS' *face brightens.*] . . . yet. [PERKINS' *face falls.*]

PERKINS.

[*Tremulously.*] Such an old friend of your uncle's,
sir . . .

DICK.

Unhappily I was unfortunate enough to offend him . . .
a personal matter.

FENELLA.

I'm sure he means to be horrid !

DICK.

Not if he's the able man of business I size him up to be.
[FAGGE *enters from the bank.*]

FAGGE.

Mr. 'Arkaway would like a few words, sir.

DICK.

[*Interrogatively to PERKINS.*] Mr. Harkaway ?

PERKINS.

The famous bookmaker. He has £50,000 with us ; advertises the fact in the sporting papers. You must see him, Mr. Jelf.

DICK.

Yes, I suppose I must. Show Mr. Harkaway in. [FAGGE *goes out.* To FENELLA.] Would you mind waiting in the next room for a few minutes ?

FENELLA.

May I come back ?

DICK.

Yes. [DICK shows her out, and then returns to his desk.

PERKINS.

He'll withdraw every farthing !

[HARKAWAY enters from the bank. He is a stout, red-faced man, the typical bookie, hoarse of voice, dressed in loud tweeds, and wearing a resplendent diamond pin and ring.

FAGGE.

Mr. Harkaway.

[He disappears.

HARKAWAY.

[In a raucous voice.] Mornin', gentlemen ! [He addresses PERKINS.] Mr. Jelf, I presoom ?

PERKINS.

This is Mr. Jelf.

DICK.

Good morning, Mr. Harkaway. Won't you sit down ?

[Indicates a chair.

HARKAWAY.

[Removing his hat and laying it on the table.] Every sporting gentleman in the country knows that I keep fifty thousand of the best with you.

DICK.

[Sits.] Yes.

HARKAWAY.

Ugly crowd outside, gentlemen! Lots of old women looking like 'ungry 'ounds. [*Pulls out a yellow paper.*] Have you seen this?

DICK.

[*As PERKINS hands it to him.*] The *City Wasp*—no. Poisonous blackmailing rag!

HARKAWAY.

The proprietor is a particular friend o' mine. And he's got a credit account as well as a debit. He's the editor of *Gospel Tidings* and *Bible Bits*.

DICK.

Indeed?

PERKINS.

Mr. Camberwell Rye.

HARKAWAY.

'Ot stuff. Seems to 'ave a down on you, Mr. Jelf.

DICK.

I can't conceive why.

HARKAWAY.

[*Pushes PERKINS out of the way, gets into the chair next DICK'S.*] Seems you refused to see him last Tuesday—insulted him——

DICK.

My late manager, Mr. Winslow, saw him.

HARKAWAY.

On the strict Q.T., as between friends,— [*In his ear, loudly.*] Square him!

DICK.

I heard you.

HARKAWAY.

[*Impressively.*] You can muzzle him! 'E's a bad lad, when 'e gets started. A hundred'd do the thing up to rights.

DICK.

Much obliged for your advice, Mr. Harkaway!

HARKAWAY.

Does that mean you refuse?

DICK.

[*Smiling.*] Unreservedly.

HARKAWAY.

[*Roughly.*] Although I've fifty thousand of the best in your vaults?

DICK.

They are yours, Mr. Harkaway—to take or leave.

HARKAWAY.

That closes my book! [*Rising.*] Mornin', gentlemen.

DICK.

Good morning, sir.

[HARKAWAY swaggers out through the centre doors.]

PERKINS.

There's no better known man in London. The crowd will recognise him at once. It's very unfortunate—very unfortunate!

DICK.

Rotten luck! Go back into the bank, Perkins, and look here——

PERKINS.

[*Dolorously.*] Yes, Mr. Jelf?

DICK.

Smile . . . and keep on smiling.

PERKINS.

[*Attempting sickly grin.*] I'll do my best.

DICK.

After all, this is my funeral, not yours. Brace up!

PERKINS.

Yes, sir. [*Assumes a more valiant pose, as he goes back into the bank. DICK crosses and opens the door on the right.*]

DICK.

Fin!

FENELLA.

What did he want?

DICK.

He wanted me to square a blackmailing editor with £100.

FENELLA.

Did you do it?

DICK.

No. I know how I should like to settle with Mr. Blackmailer Rye.

FENELLA.

How?

DICK.

With my boot.

FENELLA.

£100 is nothing.

DICK.

But the principle is everything.

FENELLA.

Richard, if you are ruined, I shall have ruined you.

DICK.

I'm not ruined yet.

FENELLA.

[*Sitting.*] Oh, I'm so unhappy—so wretched!

DICK.

Fin, dear, I understand your position, and the pressure that was brought to bear——

FENELLA.

There was no pressure.

DICK.

I mean the pressure that separated Jim and you.

FENELLA.

I broke off the engagement deliberately.

DICK.

For reasons I can sympathise with.

FENELLA.

For reasons you don't yet know. [*More firmly.*] For reasons which I have come here to tell you.

DICK.

Yes?

FENELLA.

[*Abruptly.*] I found him out.

DICK.

[*Repeating.*] Found him out?

FENELLA.

I thought he was straight and strong. Being so weak myself, I admire strength. And now—— [*Breaks off with a faint groan.*]

DICK.

Look here, Fin; you mustn't worry like this. I can always go back to the ranch, and I've been in a tighter place than this. Good Lord, yes! [*Speaking genially and with a breezy manner that suggests the West.*] I remember when my steers stampeded, the whole bunch, with nothing between them and a river in roaring flood—except me—and I was in a blue funk! At the last minute they *turned*.

These foolish customers of mine are stampeding, and they'll turn—perhaps.

FENELLA.

[*With a shudder.*] If they do turn, Richard, will you give up the bank?

DICK.

No; I mean to stick to the bank, if it will stick to me.

FENELLA.

[*Rising, excitedly.*] I must say something! On Sunday night I thought I couldn't marry you; to-day——

DICK.

Well?

FENELLA.

[*In a low firm voice.*] I want to marry you, Richard, bank or no bank.

DICK.

[*Takes her hands.*] Do you realise what you're saying? I understand the feelings that prompt you to say this, and bless you for them. [*Speaking very gently but decidedly.*] It's the first ray of light on a dark morning. But I can't have it! [*Almost fiercely.*] I won't accept pity and pretend to myself that it's . . . the other thing. [*Crosses to desk.*] For God's sake don't say anything more, because—because the temptation is too strong.

[*PERKINS enters quickly.*

PERKINS.

Will you come into the bank immediately? There has been a change for the worse. So far it has been the small

depositor who has been pestering us. The bigger men are coming in. [*He goes out, followed by DICK. FENELLA crosses and looks at her picture as SIR JONATHAN enters from the right.*]

FENELLA.

[*Excitedly.*] Sir Jonathan! Sir Jonathan! [*She clutches him.*]

SIR JONATHAN.

My dear young lady, be calm.

FENELLA.

Calm! How can I be calm? This is a matter of life and death to me.

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Soothingly.*] Come, come!

FENELLA.

Before you pronounce sentence I want to tell you something. I love Richard as he loves me.

SIR JONATHAN.

Yes, yes.

FENELLA.

Sir Jonathan, he doesn't believe that I love him, that I want him for himself, rich or poor. I'm desperate; beside myself with misery. Tell me—how can I make him see that he has become everything—yes—*everything*—to me?

VOICE.

[*Off.*] 'Ark to 'Arkway! Two to one bar one!

HARKAWAY.

[*Off.*] Yes, 'ark to me, you bloomin' fools! [SIR JONATHAN *opens the centre door and listens. The noise is deafening for an instant. Then there is a louder roar, and then silence as the bookmaker's strident tones dominate the tumult.*] 'Ark to me, I say! I'm 'ere as a backer this morning, a backer! And I'm backin' Jelf's. [*Another roar which drones away.*] Jelf's keeps all my cash, and it's going to keep it. That's all! Take my tip and leave your rhino where I leave mine—in the custody of a square man.

FENELLA.

[*By Winslow's table.*] A square man!

[*More noise, DICK rushes in.*]

SIR JONATHAN.

Who was that?

DICK.

Harkaway, the famous bookie. And I thought he was a cold-blooded coward with no more sand than a prairie dog! [*Gives a sigh of relief.*] I wanted a tonic. Now I'm ready for you, Sir Jonathan. What is the ultimatum?

SIR JONATHAN.

[*Smiling genially.*] Happily, as Chairman of the Amalgamated Association of Bankers, I am empowered to tell

you that we shall stand by you. I suggest that the decision should be made public as soon as possible.

DICK.

Thank you, Sir Jonathan. Will you make the announcement to my customers?

SIR JONATHAN.

With the greatest pleasure.

DICK.

[*Curtly.*] Thank you. [*The roar of the crowd, the tinkle of coin, the shuffling of many feet, all the various sounds are heard. Then DICK takes a heavy ruler and strikes the magohany counter. At the first blow there is less noise. The ruler crashes down a second time and the voices drone away. There is an odd shuffling of feet, very impressive. As the ruler falls for the third time there is absolute silence.*] Silence, please, for Sir Jonathan Dunne.

SIR JONATHAN.

[*At the centre doors.*] Ladies and gentlemen, I was approached yesterday by the Governor of the Bank of England with a view to obtaining a guarantee from other banks to come to the assistance of Jelf's. Late last night our Council empowered me to see Mr. Jelf this morning, and to form my own opinion as to the expedience of

offering him such help as may be necessary. I am happy to inform you officially that the Association is prepared to stand by Jelf's.

[*Loud cheers. FENELLA has sat down by Winslow's table and is quietly sobbing with her head buried in her arms.*]

DICK.

Gentlemen, I propose that you go quietly home. Who will second the motion?

HARKAWAY.

[*Off.*] I second the motion! [*Many voices shout "And I!"*]

DICK.

Those in favour of it, please hold up their hands. [*Innumerable hands go up.*] Gentlemen, the motion is carried!

[*The crowd cheers. SIR JONATHAN whispers something into DICK's ear, pointing at FENELLA. Then he disappears into the bank, closing both doors.*]

FENELLA.

[*Rising.*] Dick!

DICK.

Fin!

FENELLA.

Why don't you kiss me?

DICK.

I was just going to.

*[They meet in the centre of the room and embrace
as curtain falls.]*



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